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RODERICK HUDSON

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ODERICK HUDSON

BY

HENRY JAMES

IN TWO VOLUMES

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RODERICK HUDSON.

XIV.

SOME days afterwards it happened that Rowland, on a long afternoon ramble, took his way through one of the quiet corners of the Trastevere. He was particularly fond of this part of Rome, though he could hardly have expressed the charm he found in it. As you pass away from the dusky swarming purlieus of the Ghetto, you emerge into a region of empty, soundless, grass-grown lanes and alleys, where the shabby houses seem mouldering away in disuse, and yet your footstep brings figures of startling Roman type to the doorways. There are few monuments here, but no part of Rome seemed more historic, in the sense of being weighted with a ponderous past, blighted with the melancholy of things that had had their day. When the yellow afternoon sunshine slept on the sallow battered walls and lengthened the shadows in the grassy courtyards of small closed churches, the place acquired a strange fascination. The church of St. Cecilia has one of these sunny waste-looking courts; the edifice seems abandoned to silence and the charity of chance devotion. Rowland never passed it without going in, and he was generally the only visitor. He entered it now, but he found that two persons had

preceded him. Both were women. One was at her prayers at one of the side-altars; the other was seated against a column at the upper end of the nave. Rowland walked to the altar and paid in a momentary glance at the clever statue of the saint in death in the niche beneath it the usual tribute to the charm of polished ingenuity. As he turned away he looked at the person seated, and recognised Christina Light. Seeing that she perceived him he advanced to speak to her.

She was sitting in a listless attitude, with her hands in her lap; she seemed to be tired. She was dressed very simply, as if for walking and escaping observation. When he had greeted her he glanced back at her companion and recognised the faithful Assunta.

Christina smiled. "Are you looking for Mr. Hudson? He is not here, I am happy to say."

"If he were here one might understand," said Rowland. "This is a strange place to find you alone."

"Not at all! People call me a strange girl, and I might as well have the comfort of it. I came to take a walk; that, by the way, is part of my strangeness. I can't loll all the morning on a sofa and sit perched all the afternoon in a carriage. I get horribly restless; I must move; I must do something and see something. Mamma suggests a cup of tea. Meanwhile I put on an old dress and half a dozen veils, I take Assunta under my arm, and we start on a pedestrian tour. It's a bore that I can't take the poodle, but he attracts attention. We trudge about everywhere; there is nothing I like so much. I hope you will congratulate me on the simplicity of my tastes."

"I congratulate you on your wisdom. To live in Rome and not to walk about would, I think, be poor pleasure. But you are terribly far from home, and I am afraid you are tired."

"A little—enough to sit here a while."

"Might I offer you my company while you rest?"

"If you will promise to amuse me. I am in dismal spirits."

Saying he would do what he could, Rowland brought a chair and placed it near her. He was not in love with her; he disapproved of her; he distrusted her; and yet he felt it a kind of privilege to watch her, and he found a peculiar excitement in talking to her. The background of her nature, as he would have called it, was large and mysterious, and it emitted strange fantastic gleams and flashes. Watching for these rather quickened one's pulses. Moreover it was not a disadvantage to talk to a girl who made one keep guard on one's composure; it diminished one's usual liability to utter something less than revised wisdom.

Assunta had risen from her prayers, and as he took his place was coming back to her mistress. But Christina motioned her away. "No, no; while you are about it say a few dozen more!" she said. "Pray for *me*," she added in English. "Pray that I say nothing silly. She has been at it half an hour; I envy her volubility!"

"One often envies good Catholics," said Rowland.

"Oh, speak to me of that; I have been through that too! There was a time when I wanted immensely to be a nun; it was not a laughing matter. It was when I was about sixteen years old. I read the *Imitation* and the *Life of St. Catherine*. I fully believed in the miracles of the saints, and I was dying to have one of my own—little of a saint as I was! The least little accident that could have been twisted into a miracle would have carried me straight into the cloister. I had the real religious passion. It passed away, and as I sat here just now I was wondering what has become of it!"

Rowland had already been sensible of something in this young lady's tone which he would have called a want of veracity, and this epitome of her religious experience failed to strike him as absolutely historical.

But the trait was not disagreeable, for she herself was evidently the foremost dupe of her inventions. She had a fictitious history in which she believed much more fondly than in her real one, and an infinite capacity for extemporised reminiscence adapted to the mood of the hour. She liked to idealise herself, to take interesting and picturesque attitudes to her own imagination; and the vivacity and spontaneity of her character gave her really a starting-point in experience, so that the many-coloured flowers of fiction which blossomed in her talk were not so much perversions as sympathetic exaggerations of fact. And Rowland felt that whatever she said of herself might have been, under the imagined circumstances; energy was there, audacity, the restless questioning temperament. "I am afraid I am sadly prosaic," he said, "for in these many months now that I have been in Rome I have never ceased for a moment to look at Catholicism simply from the outside. I don't see an opening as big as your finger-nail where I could creep into it!"

"What do you believe?" asked Christina, looking at him. "Are you religious?"

"I am very old-fashioned. I believe in God."

Christina let her beautiful eyes wander a while, and then gave a little sigh. "You are much to be envied!"

"You, I imagine, in that line have nothing to envy me."

"Yes, I have. Rest!"

"You are too young to say that."

"I am not young; I have never been young! My mother took care of that. I was a little wrinkled old woman at ten."

"I am afraid," said Rowland, in a moment, "that you are fond of painting yourself in dark colours."

She looked at him a while in silence. "Do you wish to win my eternal gratitude? Prove to me that I am better than I suppose."

"I should have first to know what you really suppose."

She shook her head. "It wouldn't do! You would be horrified to learn even the things I imagine about myself, and shocked at the knowledge of evil displayed in my very mistakes."

"Well, then," said Rowland, "I will ask no questions. But, at a venture, I promise you to catch you some day in the act of doing something very good."

"Are you too trying to flatter me? I thought you and I had fallen from the first into rather a truth-speaking vein."

"Oh, I have not given it up!" said Rowland; and he determined, since he had the credit of homely directness, to push his advantage farther. The opportunity seemed excellent. But while he was hesitating how to begin, the young girl said, bending forward and clasping her hands in her lap, "Please tell me about your religion."

"Tell you about it? I can't!" said Rowland, with a good deal of emphasis.

She flushed a little. "Is it such a mighty mystery it cannot be put into words nor communicated to my base ears?"

"It is simply a sentiment that makes part of my life, and I can't detach myself from it sufficiently to talk about it."

"Religion, it seems to me, should be eloquent and aggressive. It should wish to make converts, to persuade and illumine, to take possession!"

"One's religion takes the colour of one's general disposition. I am not aggressive, and certainly I am not eloquent."

"Well, I am sure I shouldn't greatly care for anything you might say," Christina rejoined. "It would be sure to be half-hearted. You are not in the least contented."

"How do you know that?"

"Oh, I am an observer!"

"No one is absolutely contented, I suppose—but I assure you I complain of nothing."

"So much the worse for your honesty! To begin with, you are in love."

"You would not have me complain of that!"

"And it doesn't go well. There are grievous obstacles. So much I know! You needn't protest; I ask no questions. You will tell no one—me least of all. Why does one never see you?"

"Why, if I came to see you," said Rowland, deliberating, "it wouldn't be, it couldn't be, for a trivial reason—because I had not been in a month, because I was passing, because I admire you. It would be because I should have something very particular to say. I have not come because I have been slow in making up my mind to say it."

"You are simply cruel. Something particular, in this ocean of inanities? In common charity, speak!"

"I doubt whether you will like it."

"Oh, I hope to Heaven it's not some tribute to my charms!"

"It may be called a tribute to your reasonableness. That is one of your charms, you know. You perhaps remember that I gave you a hint of it the other day at Frascati."

"Has it been hanging fire all this time? Explode! I promise not to stop my ears."

"It relates to my friend Hudson." And Rowland paused. She was looking at him expectantly; her face gave no sign. "I am rather disturbed in mind about him. He seems to me at times to be in a discouraging way." He paused again, but Christina said nothing. "The case is simply this," he went on. "It was by my advice he gave up his work at home and went in for an artist's life. I made him burn his ships. I brought him to Rome, I launched him in the world, and I have undertaken to answer to—to his mother for his doing

well. It is not such smooth sailing as it might be, and I am inclined to put up prayers for fair winds. If he is to succeed, he must work—very quietly and very hard. It is not news to you, I imagine, that Hudson is a great admirer of yours."

Christina remained silent; she turned away her eyes with an air, not of confusion, but of deep deliberation. Surprising frankness had, as a general thing, struck Rowland as the keynote of her character, but she had more than once given him a suggestion of an unfathomable power of calculation, and her silence now had something which it is hardly extravagant to call portentous. He had, of course, asked himself how far it was questionable taste to inform an unprotected girl, for the needs of a cause, that another man admired her; the thing superficially had an uncomfortable analogy with treating the young lady as a cat's-paw. But he decided that even rigid discretion is not bound to take such a person at more than her own valuation, and Christina presently reassured him as to the limits of her susceptibility. "Mr. Hudson is in love with me!" she said.

Rowland flinched a trifle. Then—"Am I," he asked, "from this point of view of mine, to be glad or sorry?"

"I don't understand you."

"Why, is Hudson to be happy or unhappy?"

She hesitated a moment. "You wish him to be great in his profession? And for that you consider that he must be happy in his life?"

"Decidedly. I don't say it's a general rule, but I think it's a rule for him."

"So that if he were very happy he would become very great?"

"He would at least do himself justice."

"And by that you mean a great deal?"

"A great deal."

Christina sank back in her chair, and rested her eyes on the cracked and polished slabs of the pavement. At

last, looking up, "You have not forgotten, I suppose, that you told me he was engaged to be married?"

"By no means."

"He is still engaged then?"

"To the best of my belief."

"And yet you desire that, as you say, he should be made happy by something I can do for him?"

"What I desire is this. That your great influence with him should be exerted for his good, that it should help him and not retard him. Understand me. You probably know that your admirers have rather a restless time of it. I can answer for two of them. You don't know your own mind very well, I imagine, and as you like being admired, the poor devil on whom you have cast your spell has to pay all the expenses! Since we are really being frank, I wonder whether I might not say the great word."

"You needn't; I know it. I am a horrible coquette."

"No, not a horrible one, since I am making an appeal to your generosity. I am pretty sure you can't imagine yourself marrying my friend."

"There's nothing I can't imagine! That is my difficulty!"

Rowland's brow contracted impatiently. "I can't imagine it then!"

Christina flushed faintly; then very gently—"I am not so bad as you think," she said.

"It is not a question of badness; it is a question of whether circumstances don't make the thing an extreme improbability."

"Worse and worse. I can be bullied, then, or bribed?"

"You are not so candid as you pretend to be. My feeling is this. Hudson, as I understand him, does not need, as an artist, the stimulus of strong emotion, of passion. He is better without it; he is emotional, and passionate enough when he is left to himself. The

sooner passion is at rest, therefore, the sooner he will settle down to work, and the fewer emotions he has that are mere emotions and nothing more, the better for him. If you cared for him enough to marry him, I should have nothing to say; I should never venture to interfere. But I strongly suspect you don't, and therefore I suggest most respectfully that you leave him alone."

"If I leave him alone he will go on like a new clock, eh?"

"He will do better. He will have no excuses or pretexts."

"Oh, he makes me a pretext, does he? I am much obliged!" cried Christina, with a laugh. "What is he doing now?"

"I can hardly say. He's like a very old clock, indeed. He's moody, desultory, idle, irregular, fantastic."

"Heavens, what a list! And it's all poor me?"

"No, not all. But you are a part of it, and I turn to you, because you are a more tangible, sensible, responsible cause than the other things."

Christina raised her hand to her eyes, and bent her head thoughtfully. Rowland was puzzled to measure the effect of his venture; she rather surprised him by her gentleness. At last, without moving, "If I were to marry him," she asked, "what would have become of his *fiancée*?"

"I am bound to suppose that she would have become extremely unhappy."

Christina said nothing more, and Rowland, to let her make her reflections, left his place and strolled away. Poor Assunta, sitting patiently on a stone bench, and unprovided on this occasion with military consolation, gave him a bright frank smile which might have been construed as an expression of regret for herself, and of sympathy for her mistress. Rowland presently seated himself again near Christina.

"What do you think of your friend's infidelity to that

young girl in the little village?" she asked suddenly, looking at him.

"I don't like it."

"Was he very much in love with her?"

"He asked her to marry him. You may judge."

"Is she rich?"

"No, she is poor."

"Is she very much in love with him?"

"I know her too little to say."

She paused again, and then resumed—"You have settled in your mind, then, that I will never seriously listen to him?"

"I shall think it unlikely until the contrary is proved."

"How shall it be proved? How do you know what passes between us?"

"I can judge, of course, but from appearances; but, like you, I am an observer. Hudson has not at all the air of a happy lover!"

"If he is depressed there is a reason. He has a bad conscience. One must hope so at least. On the other hand, simply as a friend," she continued, gently, "you think I can do him no good?"

The humility of her tone, combined with her beauty, as she made this remark, was inexpressibly touching, and Rowland had an uncomfortable sense of being put at a disadvantage. "There are doubtless many good things you might do if you had proper opportunity," he said. "But you seem to be sailing with a current which leaves you little leisure for quiet benevolence. You live in the whirl and hurry of a world into which a poor artist can hardly find it to his advantage to follow you."

"In plain English, I am odiously frivolous. You put it very generously."

"I won't hesitate to say all my thought," said Rowland. "For better or worse you seem to me to belong both by character and by circumstance to what is called the world, the great world. You are made to ornament

it magnificently. You are not made to be an artist's wife."

"I see. But even from your point of view that would depend upon the artist. Extraordinary talent might make him a member of the great world."

Rowland smiled. "That is very true."

"If, as it is," Christina continued in a moment, "you take a low view of me—no, you needn't protest—I wonder what you would think if you knew certain things."

"What things do you mean?"

"Well, for example how I was brought up. I have had a horrible education. There must be some good in me, since I have perceived it, since I have turned and judged my circumstances."

"My dear Miss Light!" Rowland murmured remonstrantly.

She gave a little quick laugh. "You don't want to hear! you don't want to have to think about that!"

"Have I a right to? You needn't justify yourself."

She turned upon him a moment the quickened light of her beautiful eyes, then fell to musing again. "Is there not some novel or some play," she asked at last, "in which a beautiful wicked woman who has ensnared a young man sees his father come to her and beg her to let him go?"

"Very likely," said Rowland. "I hope she consents."

"I forget. But tell me," she continued, "shall you consider—admitting your proposition—that in ceasing to be nice to Mr. Hudson, so that he may go about his business, I do something magnanimous, heroic, sublime—something with a fine name like that?"

Rowland, elated with the prospect of gaining his point, was about to reply that she would deserve the finest name in the world; but he instantly suspected that this tone would not please her, and besides, it would not express his meaning.

"You do something I shall greatly respect," he contented himself with saying.

She made no answer, and in a moment she beckoned to her maid. "What have I to do to-day?" she asked.

Assunta meditated. "Eh, it's a very busy day! Fortunately I have a better memory than the signorina," she said, turning to Rowland. She began to count on her fingers, "We have to go to the Piè di Marmo to see about those laces that were sent to be washed. You said also that you wished to say three sharp words to the Buonvicini about your pink dress. You want some moss rosebuds for to-night, and you won't get them for nothing! You dine at the Austrian Embassy, and that Frenchman is to powder your hair. You're to come home in time to receive, for the signora gives a dance. And so away, away till morning!"

"Ah, yes, the moss roses!" Christina murmured appreciatively. "I must have a quantity—at least a hundred. Nothing but buds, eh? You must sew them in a kind of immense apron down the front of my dress. Packed tight together, eh? It will be delightfully barbarous. And then twenty more or so for my hair. They go very well with powder; don't you think so?" And she turned to Rowland. "I am going *en Pompadour.*"

"Going where?"

"To the Spanish Embassy, or whatever it is."

"All down the front, signorina? *Dio buono!* You must give me time!" Assunta cried.

"Yes, we will go!" And she left her place. She walked slowly to the door of the church, looking at the pavement, and Rowland could not guess whether she was thinking of her apron of moss rosebuds or of her opportunity for moral sublimity. Before reaching the door she turned away and stood gazing at an old picture, indistinguishable with blackness, over an altar. At last they passed out into the court. Glancing at her in the

open air, Rowland was startled; he thought he saw the traces of hastily-suppressed tears. They had lost time, she said, and they must hurry; she sent Assunta to look for a coach. She remained silent a while, scratching the ground with the point of her parasol, and then at last looking up she thanked Rowland for his confidence in her "reasonableness." "It's really very comfortable to be expected to do something good, after all the horrid things one has been used to doing—instructed, commanded, forced to do! I will think over what you have said to me." In that deserted quarter coaches are rare, and there was some delay in Assunta's procuring one. Christina talked of the church, of the picturesque old court, of that strange decaying corner of Rome. Rowland was perplexed; he was ill at ease. At last the cab arrived, but she waited a moment longer. "So, decidedly," she suddenly asked, "I can only harm him?"

"You make me feel very brutal," said Rowland.

"And he is such a fine fellow that it would be really a great pity, eh?"

"I shall praise him no more," Rowland said.

She turned away quickly, but she lingered still. "Do you remember promising me, soon after we first met, that at the end of six months you would tell me definitely what you thought of me?"

"It was a foolish promise."

"You gave it. Bear it in mind. I will think of what you have said to me. Farewell." The two women stepped into the carriage and it rolled away. Rowland stood for some minutes looking after it, and then went his way with a sigh. If this expressed general mistrust, he ought three days afterwards to have been reassured. He received by the post a note containing these words:—

"I have done it. Begin and respect me!

"C. L."

To be perfectly satisfactory, indeed, the note required a commentary. Calling that evening upon Roderick, he found one in the information offered him at the door by the old serving-woman—the startling information that the signorino had gone to Naples.

XV.

ABOUT a month later Rowland addressed to his cousin Cecilia a letter, of which the following is a portion:—

. . . "So much for myself; yet I tell you but a tithe of my own story unless I let you know how matters stand with poor Hudson, for he gives me more to think about just now than anything else in the world. I need a good deal of courage to begin this chapter. You warned me, you know, and I made rather light of your warning. I have had all kinds of hopes and fears, but hitherto, in writing to you, I have resolutely put the hopes foremost. Now, however, my pride has forsaken me, and I should like hugely to give expression to a little comfortable despair. I should like to say, 'My dear wise cousin, you were right and I was wrong; you were a shrewd observer, and I was a meddlesome donkey!' When I think of a certain talk we had about the 'salubrity of genius,' I feel my ears tingle. If this is salubrity, give me raging disease! I am pestered to death; I go about with a chronic heartache; there are moments when I could shed salt tears. There's a pretty portrait of the most placid of men! I wish I could make you understand; or rather, I wish you could make me! I don't understand a jot; it's a hideous, mocking mystery; I give it up! I don't in the least give it up, you know; I am incapable of giving it up. I sit holding my head by the hour, racking my brain, wondering what to invent.

You told me at Northampton that I took the thing too easily; you would tell me now perhaps that I take it too hard. I do, altogether; but it can't be helped. Without flattering myself I may say I am sympathetic. Many another man, before this, would have cast his perplexities to the winds, and declared that Master Hudson must lie on his bed as he had made it. Some men, perhaps, would even say that I am making a mighty ado about nothing, that I have only to give him rope and he will tire himself out. But he tugs at his rope altogether too hard for *me* to hold it comfortably! I certainly never pretended the thing was anything but an experiment; I promised nothing, I answered for nothing; I only said that the case was hopeful, and it would be a shame not to give him a chance. I have done my best, and if the machine is running down I have a right to stand aside and let it rattle. Amen, amen! No, I can write that, but I can't feel it. I can't be just; I can only be generous. I am fond of the poor devil, and I can't give him up. As for understanding him, that's another matter; nowadays I don't believe even you would. One's wits are sadly pestered over here, I assure you, and I am in the way of seeing more than one peculiar specimen of human nature. Roderick and Miss Light, between them! . . . Haven't I already told you about Miss Light? Last winter everything was perfection. Roderick struck out bravely, did really great things, and proved himself, as I supposed, thoroughly solid. He was strong, he was first-rate; I felt perfectly secure, and paid myself all kinds of compliments. We had passed at a bound into the open sea and left danger behind. But in the summer I began to be uneasy, though I succeeded in not being alarmed. When he came back to Rome, however, I saw that the tide had turned, and that we were close upon the rocks. It is, in fact, another case of Ulysses and the Sirens; only Roderick refuses to be tied to the mast. He is the most extraordinary being, the strangest mixture

of qualities. I don't understand so much force going with so much weakness—such a brilliant gift being subject to such lapses. The poor fellow is incomplete, and it is really not his own fault; Nature has given him his faculty out of hand, and bidden him be hanged with it! I never knew a man harder to advise or assist, if he is not in the mood for listening. I suppose there is some key or other to his character, but I try in vain to find it; and yet I can't believe that Providence is so cruel as to have turned the lock and thrown the key away. He perplexes me to death, and though he tires out my patience he still fascinates me. Sometimes I think he has not a grain of conscience, and sometimes I think that in a way he has an excess. He takes things at once too easily and too hard; he is both too lax and too tense, too reckless and too ambitious, too cold and too passionate. He has developed faster even than you prophesied, and for good and evil alike he takes up a formidable space. There's too much of him for me, at any rate. Yes, he *is* hard; there is no mistake about that. He's inflexible, he's brittle; and though he has plenty of spirit, plenty of soul, he hasn't what I call a heart. He has something that Miss Garland took for one, and I am pretty sure she's a judge. But she judged on scanty evidence. He has something that Christina Light, here, makes believe at times that she takes for one, but she is no judge at all! I think it is established that in the long run egotism makes a failure in conduct: is it also true that it makes a failure in the arts? . . . Roderick's standard is immensely high; I must do him that justice. He will do nothing beneath it, and while he is waiting for inspiration, his imagination, his nerves, his senses must have something to amuse them. This is a highly philosophic way of saying that he has taken to riotous living, and has just been spending a month at Naples—a city where 'pleasure' is actively cultivated—in very bad company. Are they all like that, all the men of genius?

There are a great many artists here who hammer away at their trade with exemplary industry; in fact I am surprised at their success in reducing the matter to a virtuous habit; but I really don't think that one of them has his exquisite quality of talent. It is in the matter of quantity that he has broken down. Nothing comes out of the bottle; he turns it upside down; it's no use! Sometimes he declares it's empty—that he has done all he was made to do. This I consider great nonsense; but I would nevertheless take him on his own terms if it were only I that was concerned. But I keep thinking of those two praying, trusting neighbours of yours, and I feel uncommonly like a swindler. If his working mood came on but once in five years I would willingly wait for it, and keep him on his legs somehow in the intervals; but that would be a sorry account to present to *them!* Five years of this sort of thing, moreover, would effectually settle the question. I wish he were less of a genius and more of a charlatan! He's too confoundedly all of one piece; he won't throw overboard a grain of the cargo to save the rest. Fancy him thus with all his brilliant personal charm, his handsome head, his careless step, his look as of a nervous nineteenth-century Apollo, and you will understand that there is mighty little comfort in seeing him go to the bad. He was tolerably foolish last summer at Baden-Baden, but he got on his feet and for a while he was steady. Then he began to waver again, and at last toppled over. Now, literally, he's lying prone! He came into my room last night miserably tipsy. I assure you it didn't amuse me. . . . About Miss Light it's a long story. She is one of the great beauties of all time, and worth coming barefoot to Rome, like the pilgrims of old, to see. Her complexion, her glance, her step, her dusky tresses, may have been seen before in a goddess, but never in a woman. And you may take this for truth, because I am not in love with her. On the contrary! Her education has been simply

infernal. She is corrupt, perverse, as proud as a potentate, and a coquette of the first magnitude; but she is generous and intelligent, and if you set rightly to work you may enlist her imagination in a good cause as well as in a bad one. The other day I tried to bring it over to my side. I happened to have some talk with her to which it was possible to give a serious turn, and I boldly broke ground and begged her to suffer my poor friend to go in peace. After leading me rather a dance—in conversation—she consented, and the next day, with a single word, she packed him off to Naples to drown his sorrow in debauchery. I have come to the conclusion that she is more dangerous in her virtuous moods than in her vicious ones, and that she probably has a way of turning her back which is the most provoking thing in the world. She is an actress, she couldn't forego doing the thing dramatically, and it was the dramatic touch that made it fatal. I wished her, of course, to let him down easily; but she desired to have the curtain drop on an attitude, and her attitudes have the property of depriving inflammable young artists of their reason. . . . Roderick made an admirable bust of her at the beginning of the winter, and a dozen women came rushing to him to be done, *mutatis mutandis*, in the same style. They were all great ladies, and ready to take him by the hand, but he told them all their faces didn't interest him, and sent them away vowing his destruction."

At this stage of his long burst of confidence Rowland had paused and put by his letter. He kept it three days, and then read it over. He was disposed at first to destroy it, but he decided finally to keep it, in the hope that it might strike a spark of useful suggestion from the flint of Cecilia's good sense. We know he had a talent for taking advice. And then it might be, he reflected, that his cousin's answer would throw some light on Mary Garland's present vision of things. In his altered mood he added these few lines—

"I unburdened myself the other day of this monstrous load of perplexity; I think it did me good, and I will let it stand. I was in a melancholy muddle, and I was trying to wriggle out of it. You know I like discussion in a quiet way, and there is no one with whom I can have it as quietly as with you, most sagacious of cousins! There is an excellent old lady with whom I often chat, and who talks very much to the point. But Madame Grandoni has disliked Roderick from the first, and if I were to take her advice I would wash my hands of him. You would laugh at me for my long face, but you would do that in any circumstances. I am half ashamed of my letter, for I have a faith in my friend that is deeper than my doubts. He was here last evening, talking about the Naples Museum, the Aristides, the bronzes, the Pompeian frescoes, with such a beautiful intelligence that doubt of the ultimate future seemed blasphemy. I walked back to his lodging with him, and he was as mild as midsummer moonlight. He has that ineffable something that charms and convinces; my last word about him shall not be a harsh one."

Shortly after sending his letter, going one day into his friend's studio, he found Roderick suffering the honourable torture of a visit from Mr. Leavenworth. Roderick submitted with extreme ill grace to being bored, and he was now evidently in a state of high exasperation. He had lately begun a representation of a *lazzarone* lounging in the sun; an image of serene, irresponsible, sensuous life. The real lazzarone, he had admitted, was a vile fellow; but the ideal lazzarone—and his own had been subtly idealised—was the flower of a perfect civilisation. Mr. Leavenworth had apparently just transferred his hurrying gaze to the figure.

"Something in the style of the Dying Gladiator?" he apathetically observed.

"Oh no," said Roderick, seriously, "he is not dying, he is only drunk!"

"Ah, but intoxication, you know," Mr. Leavenworth rejoined, "is not a proper subject for sculpture. Sculpture should not deal with transitory attitudes."

"Lying dead drunk is not a transitory attitude! Nothing is more permanent, more sculpturesque, more monumental!"

"An entertaining paradox," said Mr. Leavenworth, "if we had time to exercise our wits upon it. I remember at Florence an intoxicated figure by Michael Angelo which seemed to me a deplorable aberration of a great mind. I myself touch liquor in no shape whatever. I have travelled through Europe on cold water. The most varied and attractive lists of wines are offered me, but I brush them aside. No cork has ever been drawn at my command!"

"The movement of drawing a cork calls into play a very pretty set of muscles," said Roderick. "I think I will make a figure in that position."

"A Bacchus realistically treated! My dear young friend, never trifle with your lofty mission. Spotless marble should represent virtue, not vice!" And Mr. Leavenworth placidly waved his hand, as if to exorcise the spirit of levity, while his glance journeyed with leisurely benignity to another object—a marble replica of the bust of Christina. "An ideal head, I presume," he went on; "a fanciful representation of one of the pagan goddesses—a Diana, a Flora, a naiad or dryad? I often regret that our American artists should not boldly cast off that extinct nomenclature."

"She is neither a naiad nor a dryad," said Roderick, "and her name is as good as yours or mine."

"You call her——?" Mr. Leavenworth blandly inquired.

"Christina Light," Rowland interposed in charity.

"Ah, our great American beauty! Not a pagan goddess—an American Christian lady! Yes, I have had the pleasure of conversing with Miss Light. Her conversational powers are not remarkable, but her beauty is

of a high order. I observed her the other evening at a large party, where some of the proudest members of the European aristocracy were present—duchesses, princesses, countesses, and others distinguished by similar titles. But for beauty, grace, and elegance my fair countrywoman left them all nowhere. What woman can compare with a truly refined American lady? The duchesses the other night had no attractions for my eyes; they looked coarse and sensual! It seemed to me that the tyranny of class distinctions must indeed be terrible when such countenances could inspire admiration. You see more beautiful girls in an hour on Broadway than in the whole tour of Europe. Miss Light now, on Broadway, would excite no particular remark."

"Oh, damn Broadway!" Roderick murmured.

Mr. Leavenworth stared, as if this were unpatriotic; then he resumed, almost severely—"I suppose you have heard the news about our fair countrywoman."

"What news?" Roderick had stood with his back turned, fiercely poking at his *lazzarone;* but at Mr. Leavenworth's last words he faced quickly about.

"It's the news of the hour, I believe. Miss Light is admired by the highest people here. They tacitly recognise her superiority. She has had offers of marriage from various great lords. I was extremely happy to learn this circumstance, and to know that they had all been left sighing. She has not been dazzled by their titles and their gilded coronets. She has judged them simply as men, and found them wanting. One of them, however, a young Neapolitan prince, I believe, has, after a long probation, succeeded in making himself acceptable. Miss Light has at last said yes, and the engagement has just been announced. I am not generally a reporter of the gossip of the passing hour, but the fact was alluded to an hour ago by a lady with whom I was conversing, and here in Europe these conventional futilities usurp the lion's share of one's attention. I therefore retained the

circumstance in my mind. Yes, I regret that Miss Light should marry one of these used-up foreigners. Americans should stand by each other. If she wanted a brilliant match we could have organised it for her. If she wanted a fine fellow—a fine, sharp, enterprising, modern man—I would have undertaken to find him for her without going out of my native city—Columbus, Ohio. And if she wanted a big fortune, I would have found her twenty that she would have had hard work to spend; money down—not tied up in fever-stricken lands and worm-eaten villas! What is the name of the young man? Prince Castaway, or some such thing!"

It was well for Mr. Leavenworth that he was fond of listening to his own correct periods; for the current of his eloquence floated him past the short, sharp, startled cry with which Roderick greeted his anecdote. The young man stood looking at him with parted lips and an excited eye.

"The position of woman," Mr. Leavenworth thoughtfully resumed, "is certainly a very degraded one in these countries. I doubt whether a European princess can command the respect which in our country is exhibited towards the obscurest females. The civilisation of a country should be measured by the deference shown to the weaker sex. Judged by that standard, where are they over here?"

Though Mr. Leavenworth had not observed Roderick's emotion it was not lost upon Rowland, who was making sundry uncomfortable reflections upon it. He saw that it had instantly become one with the acute irritation produced by the poor gentleman's oppressive personality, and that an explosion of some sort was imminent. Mr. Leavenworth, with calm unconsciousness, proceeded to fire the mine.

"And now for our Culture!" he said in the same sonorous tones, demanding with a gesture the unveiling

of the figure, which stood somewhat apart, muffled in a great sheet.

Roderick stood looking at him for a moment with concentrated rancour, and then strode to the statue and twitched off the cover. Mr. Leavenworth settled himself into his chair with an air of flattered proprietorship, and scanned the unfinished image. "I can conscientiously express myself as gratified with the general conception," he said. "The figure has considerable majesty, and the countenance wears a fine open expression. The forehead, however, strikes me as not sufficiently intellectual. In the statue of Culture, you know, that should be the great point. The eye should instinctively seek the forehead. Couldn't you elevate it a little?"

Roderick, for all answer, tossed the sheet back over the statue. "Oblige me, sir," he said, "oblige me! Never mention that thing again."

"Never mention it? Why, my dear sir——"

"Never mention it. It's an abomination!"

"An abomination! My Culture!"

"Yours, indeed!" cried Roderick. "It's none of mine. I disown it."

"Disown it, if you please," said Mr. Leavenworth, sternly, "but finish it first!"

"I would rather smash it!" cried Roderick.

"This is folly, sir. You must keep your engagements."

"I made no engagement. A sculptor isn't a tailor. Did you ever hear of inspiration? Mine is dead! And it's no laughing matter. You yourself killed it."

"I—I—killed your inspiration?" cried Mr. Leavenworth, with the accent of righteous wrath. "You are a very ungrateful young man! If ever I have been encouraging to any one, I have been so to you!"

"I appreciate your good intentions, and I don't wish to be uncivil. But your encouragement is—superfluous. I can't work for you!"

"I call this ill-humour, my good sir!" said Mr. Leavenworth, as if he had found the damning word.

"Oh, I'm in an infernal humour!" Roderick answered.

"Pray, sir, is it my inopportune allusion to Miss Light's marriage?"

"It's your inopportune everything! I don't say that to offend you; I beg your pardon if it does. I say it by way of making our rupture complete, irretrievable!"

Rowland had stood by in silence, but he now interfered. "Listen to me," he said, laying his hand on Roderick's arm. "You are standing on the edge of a gulf. If you suffer this accident to put you out, you take your plunge. It's no matter that you don't like your work; you will do the wisest thing you ever did if you make the effort of will necessary for finishing it. Destroy the statue then, if you like, but make the effort. I speak the truth!"

Roderick looked at him with eyes that still inexorableness made almost tender. "You, too?" he simply said.

Rowland felt that he might as well attempt to squeeze water from a polished crystal as hope to move him. He turned away and walked into the adjoining room with a sense of sickening helplessness. In a few moments he came back and found that Mr. Leavenworth had departed—presumably in a manner sufficiently majestic. Roderick was sitting with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands.

Rowland made one more attempt. "You won't mind me, eh?"

"Be so good as not to mind *me!*"

"There's one more point—that you shouldn't go to Mrs. Light's for a month."

"I shall go there this evening."

"That too is an utter folly."

"There are such things as necessary follies."

"You are not reflecting; you are speaking in passion."

"Why, then, do you make me speak?"

Rowland meditated a moment. "Is it also necessary that you should lose the best friend you have?"

Roderick looked up. "That's for you to settle!"

His best friend clapped on his hat and strode away; in a moment the door closed behind him.

XVI.

ROWLAND walked hard for a couple of hours. He passed up the Corso, out of the Porta del Popolo and into the Villa Borghese, of which he made a complete circuit. The keenness of his irritation subsided, but it left him with an intolerable weight on his heart. When dusk had fallen he found himself near the lodging of his friend Madame Grandoni. He frequently paid her a visit during the hour which preceded dinner, and he now ascended her unillumined staircase and rang at her relaxed bell-rope with an especial desire for diversion. He was told that for the moment she was occupied, but that if he would come in and wait she would presently be with him. He had not sat musing in the firelight for ten minutes when he heard the jingle of the door-bell, and then a rustling and murmuring in the hall. The door of the little parlour opened, but before the visitor appeared he had recognised her voice. Christina Light swept forward, preceded by her poodle, and almost filling the narrow room with the train of her dress. She was coloured here and there by the flickering firelight.

"They told me you were here," she said simply, as she took a seat.

"And yet you came in? It is very brave," said Rowland.

"You are the brave one, when one thinks of it! Where is the padrona?"

"Occupied for the moment. But she is coming."

"How soon?"

"I have already waited ten minutes; I expect her from moment to moment."

"Meanwhile, we are alone?" And she glanced into the dusky corners of the room.

"Unless Stenterello counts," said Rowland.

"Oh, he knows my secrets—unfortunate brute!" She sat silent awhile, looking into the firelight. Then at last, glancing at Rowland, "Come! say something pleasant!" she exclaimed.

"I have been very happy to hear of your engagement."

"No, I don't mean that. I have heard that so often, only since breakfast, that it has lost all sense. I mean some of those unexpected charming things that you said to me a month ago at St. Cecilia's."

"I offended you then," said Rowland. "I was afraid I had."

"Ah, it occurred to you? Why haven't I seen you since?"

"Really I don't know." And he began to hesitate for an explanation. "I have called—but you have never been at home."

"You were careful to choose the wrong times. You have a way with a poor girl! You sit down and inform her that she is a person with whom a respectable young man can't associate without contamination; your friend is a very nice fellow, you are very careful of his morals, you wish him to know none but nice people, and you beg me therefore to desist. You request me to take these suggestions to heart and to act upon them as promptly as possible. They are not particularly flattering to my vanity. Vanity, however, is a sin, and I listen submissively, with an immense desire to be just. If I have many faults I know it in a general way, and I try, on the whole, to do my best. '*Voyons*,' I say to myself, 'it isn't particularly charming to hear oneself made out

such a low person, but it is worth thinking over; there is probably a good deal of truth in it, and at any rate we must be as good a girl as we can.' That's the great point! And then here's a magnificent chance for humility. If there's doubt in the matter, let the doubt count against oneself. That is what Saint Catherine did, and Saint Theresa, and all the others, and they are said to have had in consequence the most ineffable joys. Let us go in for a little ineffable joy! I tried it; I swallowed my rising sobs, I made you my curtsey, I determined I would not be spiteful, nor passionate, nor vengeful, nor anything that is supposed to be particularly feminine. I was a better girl than you made out—better, at least, than you thought; but I would let the difference go, and do magnificently right lest I should not do right enough. I thought of it a great deal for six hours, when I know I didn't seem to be thinking, and then at last I did it! *Santo Dio!*"

"My dear Miss Light, my dear Miss Light!" said Rowland pleadingly.

"Since then," the young girl went on, "I have been waiting for the ineffable joys. They haven't yet turned up!"

"Pray, listen to me!" Rowland urged.

"Nothing, nothing, nothing has come of it. I have passed the dreariest month of my life!"

"You are a very terrible young woman!" cried Rowland.

"What do you mean by that?"

"A good many things. We will talk them over. But, first, forgive me if I have offended you!"

She looked at him a moment, hesitating, and then thrust her hands into her muff. "That means nothing. Forgiveness is between equals, and you don't regard me as your equal."

"Really, I don't understand!"

Christina rose and moved for a moment about the

room. Then turning suddenly, "You don't believe in me!" she cried, "not a grain! I don't know what I would not give to *force* you to believe in me!"

Rowland sprang up, protesting, but before he had time to go far, one of the scanty *portières* was raised, and Madame Grandoni came in, pulling her wig straight. "But you shall believe in me yet," murmured Christina, as she passed towards her hostess.

Madame Grandoni turned tenderly to Christina. "I must give you a very solemn kiss, my dear; you are the heroine of the hour. You have really accepted him, eh?"

"So they say!"

"But you ought to know best."

"I don't know—I don't care!" She stood with her hand in Madame Grandoni's, but looking askance at Rowland.

"That's a pretty state of mind," said the old lady, "for a young person who is going to become a princess."

Christina shrugged her shoulders. "Every one expects me to go into ecstasies over that! Could anything be more vulgar? They may chuckle by themselves! Will you let me stay to dinner?"

"If you can dine on a *risotto*. But I imagine you are expected at home."

"You are right. Prince Casamassima dines there *en famille*. But I am not in his family yet!"

"Do you know you are very wicked? I have half a mind not to keep you."

Christina dropped her eyes reflectively. "I beg you will let me stay," she said. "If you wish to cure me of my wickedness you must be very patient and kind with me. It will be worth the trouble. You must show confidence in me." And she gave another glance at Rowland. Then suddenly, in a different tone, "I don't know what I am saying!" she cried. "I am weary, I am more lonely than ever, I wish I were dead!" The

tears rose to her eyes, she struggled with them an instant, and buried her face in her muff; but at last she burst into uncontrollable sobs, and flung her arms upon Madame Grandoni's neck. This shrewd woman gave Rowland a significant nod and a little shrug over the young girl's beautiful bowed head, and then led Christina tenderly away into the adjoining room. Rowland, left alone, stood there for an instant, intolerably puzzled, face to face with Miss Light's poodle, who had set up a sharp unearthly cry of sympathy with his mistress. Rowland vented his confusion in dealing a rap with his stick at the animal's unmelodious muzzle, and then rapidly left the house. He saw Mrs. Light's carriage waiting at the door, and heard afterwards that Christina went home to dinner.

A couple of days later he went for a fortnight to Florence. He had twenty minds to leave Italy altogether; and at Florence he could at least more freely decide upon his future movements. He felt deeply, incurably disgusted. Reflective benevolence stood prudently aside, and for the time touched the source of his irritation with no softening sidelights.

It was the middle of March, and by the middle of March in Florence the spring is already warm and deep. He had an infinite relish for the place and the season, but as he strolled by the Arno and paused here and there in the great galleries they failed to soothe his irritation. He was sore at heart, and as the days went by the soreness deepened rather than healed. He felt as if he had a complaint against fortune; good-natured as he was, his good-nature this time quite declined to let it pass. He had tried to be wise, he had tried to be kind, he had engaged in an estimable enterprise; but his wisdom, his kindness, his energy, had been thrown back in his face. He was disappointed, and his disappointment had an angry spark in it. The sense of wasted time, of wasted hope and faith, kept him constant company. There were

times when the beautiful things about him only exasperated his discontent. He went to the Pitti Palace, and Raphael's Madonna of the Chair seemed in its soft serenity to mock him with the suggestion of unattainable repose. He lingered on the bridges at sunset, and knew that the light was enchanting and the mountains were divine, but there seemed to be something horribly invidious and unwelcome in the fact. He felt, in a word, like a man who has been cruelly defrauded, and who wishes to have his revenge. Life owed him, he thought, a compensation, and he should be restless and resentful until he found it. He knew—or he seemed to know—where he should find it; but he hardly told himself, and thought of the thing under mental protest, as a man in want of money may think of certain funds that he holds in trust. In his melancholy meditations the idea of something better than all this, something that might softly, richly interpose, something that might reconcile him to the future, something that might make one's tenure of life strong and zealous instead of mechanical and uncertain—the idea of concrete compensation, in a word—shaped itself sooner or later into the image of Mary Garland.

Very odd, you may say, that at this time of day Rowland should still be brooding over a girl of no brilliancy, of whom he had had but the lightest of glimpses two years before; very odd that so deep an impression should have been made by so lightly pressed an instrument. We must admit the oddity, and remark simply in explanation that his sentiment apparently belonged to that species of emotion of which, by the testimony of the poets, the very name and essence are oddity. One night he slept but half an hour; he found his thoughts taking a turn which excited him portentously. He walked up and down his room half the night. It looked out on the Arno; the noise of the river came in at the open window; he felt like dressing and going down into the

streets. Towards morning he flung himself into a chair; though he was wide awake he was less excited. It seemed to him that he saw his idea from the outside, that he judged it and condemned it; yet it stood there before him, very distinct, and in a certain way imperious. During the day he tried to banish it and forget it; but it fascinated, haunted, at moments frightened him. He tried to amuse himself, paid visits, resorted to several violent devices for diverting his thoughts. If on the morrow he had committed a crime, the persons whom he had seen that day would have testified that he had talked strangely and had not seemed like himself. He felt certainly very unlike himself; long afterwards, in retrospect, he used to reflect that during those days he had for a while been literally *beside* himself. His idea persisted; it clung to him like a sturdy beggar. The sense of the matter, roughly expressed, was this. If Roderick were really going, as he himself had phrased it, to "fizzle out," one might help him on the way—one might smooth the *descensus Averni.* For forty-eight hours there swam before Rowland's eyes a vision of Roderick, graceful and beautiful as he passed, plunging like a diver into a misty gulf. The gulf was destruction, annihilation, death; but if death were decreed, why should not the agony be brief? Beyond this vision there faintly glimmered another, as in the children's game of the magic lantern a picture is superposed on the white wall before the last one has quite faded. It represented Mary Garland standing there with eyes in which the horror seemed slowly, slowly to expire, and hanging motionless hands which at last made no resistance when his own offered to take them. When of old a man was burnt at the stake it was cruel to have to be present; but if one were present it was a charity to lend a hand to pile up the fuel and make the flames do their work quickly and the smoke muffle up the victim. With all deference to your charity, this was perhaps an obligation you would especially feel if you

had a reversionary interest in something the victim was to leave behind him.

One morning in the midst of all this Rowland walked heedlessly out of one of the city gates and found himself on the road to Fiesole. It was a completely lovely day; the March sun felt like May, as the English poet of Florence says; the thick-blossomed shrubs and vines that hung over the walls of villa and *podere* flung their odorous promise into the warm still air. Rowland followed the winding climbing lanes; lingered as he got higher beneath the rusty cypresses, beside the low parapets, where you look down on the charming city and sweep the vale of the Arno; reached the little square before the cathedral, and rested a while in the massive, dusky church; then climbed higher, to the Franciscan convent which is poised on the very apex of the great hill. He rang at the little gateway; a shabby, senile, red-faced brother admitted him with almost maudlin friendliness. There was a dreary chill in the chapel and the corridors, and he passed rapidly through them into the delightfully steep and tangled old garden which runs wild over the forehead of the mountain. He had been in it before, and he was very fond of it. The garden hangs in the air, and you ramble from terrace to terrace, and wonder how it keeps from slipping down in full consummation of its dishonour and decay into the nakedly romantic gorge beneath. It was just noon when Rowland went in, and after roaming about a while he flung himself in the sun on a mossy stone bench, and pulled his hat over his eyes. The short shadows of the brown-coated cypresses above him had grown very long, and yet he had not passed back through the convent. One of the monks, in his faded snuff-coloured robe, came wandering out into the garden, reading his greasy little breviary. Suddenly he came towards the bench on which Rowland had stretched himself, and paused a moment attentively. Rowland was lingering there still; he was sitting with

his head in his hands and his elbows on his knees. He seemed not to have heard the sandalled tread of the good brother, but as the monk remained watching him he at last looked up. It was not the ignoble old man who had admitted him, but a pale gaunt personage, of a graver and more ascetic, and yet of a benignant aspect. Rowland's face bore the traces of extreme trouble. The *frate* kept his finger in his little book, and folded his arms picturesquely across his breast. It can hardly be determined whether his attitude, as he bent his sympathetic Italian eye upon Rowland, was a happy incident or the result of an exquisite spiritual discernment. To Rowland, at any rate, under the emotion of that moment, it seemed blessedly opportune. He rose and approached the monk, laying his hand on his arm.

"My brother," he said, "did you ever see the Devil?"

The *frate* gazed gravely and crossed himself. "Heaven forbid!"

"He was here," Rowland went on, "here in this lovely garden, as he was once in Paradise, half an hour ago. But have no fear; I drove him out." And Rowland stooped and picked up his hat, which had rolled away into a bed of cyclamen in vague symbolism of an actual physical tussle.

"You have been tempted, my brother?" asked the friar, tenderly.

"Hideously!"

"And you have resisted—and conquered!"

"I believe I have conquered."

"The blessed Saint Francis be praised! It is well done. If you like we will offer a mass for you."

"I am not a Catholic," said Rowland.

The *frate* smiled with dignity. "That is a reason the more."

"But it's for you, then, to choose. Shake hands with me," Rowland added; "that will do as well; and suffer me as I go out to stop a moment in your chapel."

They shook hands and separated. The *frate* crossed himself, opened his book, and wandered away in relief against the western sky. Rowland passed back into the convent and paused long enough in the chapel to look for the alms-box. He had had what is vulgarly called a great scare; he believed very poignantly for the time in the Devil, and he felt an irresistible need to subscribe to any institution which engaged to keep him at a distance.

The next day he returned to Rome, and the day after that he went in search of Roderick. He found him on the Pincian, with his back turned to the crowd, looking at the sunset. "I went to Florence," Rowland said, "and I thought of going farther; but I came back on purpose to give you another piece of advice. Decidedly, you won't leave Rome?"

"Never!" said Roderick.

"The only chance that I see, then, of a revival of your sense of responsibility to—to those various sacred things you have forgotten—is in sending for your mother to join you here."

Roderick stared. "For my mother?"

"For your mother—and for Miss Garland."

Roderick still stared; and then, slowly and faintly, his face flushed. "For Mary Garland—for my mother?" he repeated. "Send for them?"

"Tell me this; I have often wondered, but till now I have forborne to ask. You are still engaged to your cousin?"

Roderick frowned darkly, but assented.

"Wouldn't it give you pleasure, then, to see her?"

Roderick turned away, and for some moments answered nothing. "Pleasure!" he said at last, huskily. "Pain will do as well!"

"I regard you as a sick man," Rowland continued. "In such a case Miss Garland would say that her place is at your side."

Roderick looked at him some time askance, mistrustfully. "Is this a deep-laid snare?" he asked, slowly.

Rowland had come back with all his patience rekindled, but these words gave it an almost fatal chill. "Heaven forgive you!" he cried, bitterly. "My idea has been simply this—try in decency to understand it. I have tried to befriend you, to help you, to inspire you with confidence, and I have failed. I took you from the hands of your mother and that girl, and it seems to me my duty to restore you to their hands. That's all I have to say."

He was going, but Roderick forcibly detained him. It would have been but a rough way of expressing it to say that one could never know how Roderick would take a thing. It had happened more than once that when hit hard deservedly he had received the blow with touching gentleness. On the other hand, he had often resented the softest taps. The secondary effect of Rowland's present admonition seemed reassuring. "I beg you to wait," he said, "to forgive that shabby speech, and to let me reflect." And he walked up and down a while reflecting. At last he stopped, with a look in his face that Rowland had not seen all the winter. It was strikingly beautiful.

"How strange it is," he said, "that the simplest devices are the last that occur to one!" And he broke into a light laugh. "To see Mary Garland is just what I want. And my mother—my mother can't hurt me now!"

"You will write, then?"

"I will telegraph. They must come at whatever cost. Striker can arrange it all for them."

In a couple of days he told Rowland that he had received a telegraphic answer to his message, informing him that the two ladies were to sail immediately for Leghorn in one of the small steamers which ply between that port and New York. They would arrive, therefore,

in less than a month. Rowland passed this month of expectation in no very serene frame of mind. His suggestion had had its source in the deepest places of his agitated conscience; but there was something intolerable in the thought of the suffering to which the event would probably subject those undefended women. They had scraped together their scanty funds, and embarked at twenty-four hours' notice upon the dreadful sea to journey tremulously to shores darkened by the shadow of deeper alarms. He could only promise himself to be their devoted friend and servant. Preoccupied as he was, he was able to observe that expectation, with Roderick, took a form which seemed singular even among his characteristic singularities. If redemption—Roderick seemed to reason—was to arrive with his mother and his affianced bride, these last moments of error should be doubly erratic. He did nothing; but inaction, with him, took on an unwonted air of gentle gaiety. He laughed and whistled and went often to Mrs. Light's; though Rowland failed to guess in what fashion present circumstances had modified his relations with Christina. The month ebbed away, and Rowland daily expected to hear from Roderick that he had gone to Leghorn to meet the ship. He heard nothing, and late one evening, not having seen his friend in three or four days, he stopped at Roderick's lodging to assure himself that he had gone at last. A cab was standing in the street, but as it was a couple of doors off he hardly heeded it. The hall at the foot of the staircase was dark, like most Roman halls, and he paused in the open doorway on hearing the advancing footstep of a person with whom he wished to avoid coming into collision. While he did so he heard another footstep behind him, and turning round found that Roderick himself had just overtaken him. At the same moment a woman's figure advanced from within, into the light of the street lamp, and a face, half startled, glanced at him out of the darkness. He gave a cry—it was the

face of Mary Garland. Her glance flew past him to Roderick, and in a second a startled exclamation broke from her own lips. It made Rowland turn again. Roderick stood there, pale, apparently trying to speak, but saying nothing. His lips were parted, and he was wavering slightly with a strange movement—the movement of a man who has drunk too much. Then Rowland's eyes met Miss Garland's again, and her own, which had rested a moment on Roderick's, were formidable.

XVII.

How it occurred that Roderick had failed to be at Leghorn at the moment of his mother's arrival was never clearly ascertained; for he undertook to give no elaborate explanation of his fault. He never indulged in professions (touching personal conduct) as to the future, or in remorse as to the past, and as he would have asked no praise if he had travelled night and day to embrace Mrs. Hudson as she set foot on shore, he made (in Rowland's presence at least) no apology for having left her to come in search of him. It was to be said that, thanks to an unprecedentedly fine season, the voyage of the two ladies had been surprisingly rapid, and that, according to common probabilities, if Roderick had left Rome on the morrow (as he declared that he had intended) he would still have had a day or two of waiting at Leghorn. Rowland's silent inference was that Christina Light had beguiled him into letting the time slip, and it was accompanied with a silent inquiry whether she had done so unconsciously or maliciously. He had told her presumably that his mother and his cousin were about to arrive; and it was pertinent to remember hereupon that she was a young lady of mysterious impulses. Rowland

heard in due time the story of the adventures of the two ladies from Northampton. Mary Garland's wish, at Leghorn, on finding they were left to their own devices, had been to telegraph to Roderick and await an answer; for she knew that their arrival was a trifle premature. But Mrs. Hudson's maternal heart had taken the alarm. Roderick's sending for them was, to her imagination, a confession of illness, and his not being at Leghorn a proof of it; an hour's delay was therefore cruel both to herself and to him. She insisted on immediate departure; and, unskilled as they were in the mysteries of foreign (or even of domestic) travel, they had hurried in trembling eagerness to Rome. They had arrived late in the evening, and knowing nothing of inns, had got into a cab and proceeded to Roderick's lodging. At the door poor Mrs. Hudson's trepidation had overcome her, and she had sat quaking and crying in the vehicle. Mary had bravely gone in, groped her way up the dusky staircase, reached Roderick's door and, with the assistance of such acquaintance with the Italian tongue as she had culled from a phrase-book during the calm hours of the voyage, had learned from the old woman who had her cousin's household economy in charge, that he was in the best of health and spirits, and had gone forth a few hours before with his hat on his ear *per divertirsi*.

These things Rowland learned during a visit he paid the two ladies the evening after their arrival. Mrs. Hudson spoke of them at great length, and with an air of clinging confidence in Rowland which told him that he was now enshrined in her innermost favour. But her fright was over, though she was still catching her breath a little, like a person dragged ashore out of waters uncomfortably deep. She was excessively bewildered and confused, and seemed more than ever to demand a tender handling from her friends. Before her companion Rowland was distinctly conscious that he trembled. He wondered extremely what was going on

in this young lady's mind; what was her silent commentary on the incidents of the night before. He wondered all the more because he immediately perceived that she was now an altered woman, and that the difference was not an injury. She was older, easier, more free, she had more of the manner of society. She had more beauty as well, inasmuch as her beauty before had been the quality of her expression, and the sources from which this beauty was fed had in these two years evidently not wasted themselves. Rowland felt almost instantly—he could hardly have said why; it was in her voice, in her tone, in the air—that a total change had passed over her attitude towards himself. She trusted him now absolutely; whether or no she liked him, she believed in his solidity. He felt that during the coming weeks he should need to be solid. Mrs. Hudson was at one of the smaller hotels, and her sitting-room was frugally lighted by a couple of candles. Rowland made the most of this dim illumination to try to detect the afterglow of that frightened flash from Mary's eyes the night before. It had been but a flash, for what provoked it had instantly vanished. Rowland, on this occasion, seeing Roderick instantly perceive what had happened, had given him a silent blessing. If Roderick had been drinking, its gravity sobered him on the spot; in a single moment he collected his wits. The next moment, with a ringing jovial cry, he was folding the young girl in his arms, and the next he was beside his mother's carriage, half smothered in her sobs and caresses. Rowland had recommended an hotel close at hand, and had then discreetly retired. Roderick was at this time doing his part superbly, and Mary Garland's brow was serene. It was serene now, twenty-four hours later; but nevertheless her alarm had lasted an appreciable moment. What had become of it? It had dropped down deep into her memory, and it was lying there for the present in the shade. But from one day to another,

Rowland said to himself, it would hold up its head—it would begin to watch and listen—it would stand there confronting him. Meanwhile he made the most of the hours—he passed them in the consciousness of being near her. The two ladies had spent the day within doors, resting from the fatigues of travel. The younger traveller, Rowland suspected, was not so fatigued as she suffered it to be assumed. She had remained with Mrs. Hudson to attend to her personal wants, which the latter seemed to think, now that she was in a foreign land with a southern climate and a Catholic religion, would forthwith become very complex and formidable, though as yet they had simply resolved themselves into a desire for a great deal of tea, and for a certain extremely familiar old black and white shawl across her feet, as she lay on the sofa. But the sense of novelty was evidently strong upon Mary, and the light of expectation was in her eye. She was restless and excited; she moved about the room and went often to the window; she was observing keenly; she watched the Italian servants as they came and went; she had already had a long colloquy with the French chambermaid, who had expounded her views on the Roman question; she noted the small differences in the furniture, in the cookery, in the sounds that came in from the street. Rowland was sure that she observed to good purpose, that she only needed opportunity, and that she would gather impressions as thickly clustered as the purple bunches of a vintage. He wished immensely he might have a hand in it; he wished he might show her Rome. That, of course, would be Roderick's office. But he promised himself at least to take advantage of off-hours.

"It behoves you to appreciate your good fortune," he said to her. "To be young and elastic, and yet old enough and wise enough to discriminate and reflect, and to come to Italy for the first time—that is one of the greatest pleasures that life has to offer us. It is but right

to remind you of it, so that you may make the most of your chances and may not accuse yourself later of having wasted the precious season."

Mary looked at him, smiling intently, and went to the window again. "I expect to enjoy it," she said. "Don't be afraid; I am not wasteful."

"I am afraid we are not qualified, you know," said Mrs. Hudson. "We are told that you must know so much, that you must have read so many books. Our taste has not been cultivated. When I was a young lady at school I remember I had a medal with a pink ribbon for 'proficiency in ancient history'—the seven kings, or is it the seven hills? and Quintus Curtius and Julius Cæsar, and—and that period, you know. I believe I have my medal somewhere in a drawer now, but I have forgotten all about the kings. But after Roderick came to Italy we tried to learn something about it. Last winter Mary used to read *Corinne* to me in the evenings, and in the mornings she used to read another book to herself. What was it, Mary, that book that was so long, you know—in fifteen volumes?"

"It was Sismondi's *Italian Republics*," said Mary, simply.

Rowland could not help laughing; whereupon Mary blushed. "Did you finish it?" he asked.

"Yes, and began another—a shorter one—Roscoe's *Leo the Tenth*."

"Did you find them interesting?"

"Oh yes."

"Do you like history?"

"Some of it."

"That's a woman's answer! And do you like art?"

She paused a moment. "I have never seen it!"

"You have great advantages now, my dear, with Roderick and Mr. Mallet," said Mrs. Hudson. "I am sure no young lady ever had such advantages. You come straight to the highest authorities. Roderick, I suppose,

will show you the practice of art, and Mr. Mallet, perhaps, if he will be so good, will show you the theory. As an artist's wife you ought to know something about it."

"One learns a good deal about it here by simply living," said Rowland; "by going and coming about one's daily avocations."

"Dear, dear, how wonderful that we should be here in the midst of it!" murmured Mrs. Hudson. "To think of art being out there in the streets! We didn't see much of it last evening as we drove from the station. But the streets were so dark, and we were so frightened! But we are very easy now; are we not, Mary?"

"I am very happy," said Mary, gravely, wandering back to the window again.

Roderick came in at this moment and kissed his mother, and then went over and joined his betrothed. Rowland sat with Mrs. Hudson, who evidently had a word which she deemed of some value for his private ear. She followed Roderick with intensely earnest eyes.

"I wish to tell you, sir," she said, "how very grateful—how very thankful—what a happy mother I am! I feel as if I owed it all to you. To find my poor boy so handsome, so prosperous, so elegant, so famous—and ever to have doubted of you! What must you think of me? You are our guardian angel, sir. I often say so to Mary."

Rowland wore in response to this speech a rather inscrutable countenance. He could only murmur that he was glad she found Roderick looking well. He had, of course, promptly asked himself whether it would be the best policy just to give her a word of warning—turn the handle of the door through which, later, disappointment might enter. But he had determined to say nothing, and simply to wait for Roderick to find effective inspiration in those confidently expectant eyes. It was to be supposed that he was seeking for it now; he remained some time at the window with his cousin. But at last he turned

away and came over to the fireside with a contraction of the eyebrows which seemed to intimate that the young girl's influence was, for the moment at least, not soothing. She presently followed him, and for an instant Rowland observed her watching him as if she thought him strange. "Strange enough," thought Rowland, "he may seem to her if he will!" Roderick directed his glance to his friend with a certain peremptory air which—roughly interpreted—was equivalent to a request to share the intellectual expense of entertaining the ladies. "Heaven help us!" Rowland cried within himself; "is he already tired of them?"

"To-morrow, of course, we must begin to put you through the mill," Roderick said to his mother. "And be it hereby known to Mallet that we count upon him to turn the wheel."

"I will do as you please, my son," said Mrs. Hudson. "So long as I have you with me I don't care where I go. We must not take up too much of Mr. Mallet's time."

"His time is inexhaustible; he has nothing under the sun to do. Have you, Rowland? If you had seen the big hole I have been making in it! Where will you go first? You have your chôice—from the Scala Santa to the Cloaca Maxima."

"Let us take things in order," said Rowland. "We will go first to Saint Peter's. Miss Garland, I hope you are impatient to see Saint Peter's."

"I should like to go first to Roderick's studio," said Miss Garland.

"It's a very nasty place," said Roderick. "But do what you like."

"Yes, we must see your beautiful things before we can look contentedly at anything else," said Mrs. Hudson.

"I have no beautiful things," said Roderick. "You may see what there is! What makes you look so odd?"

This inquiry was abruptly addressed to his mother,

who in response glanced appealingly at Mary, and raised a startled hand to her smooth hair.

"No, it's your face," said Roderick. What has happened to it these two years? It has changed its expression."

"Your mother has prayed a great deal," said Mary, simply.

"I didn't suppose, of course, it was from doing anything bad! It makes you a very good face—very interesting, very solemn. It has very fine lines in it; something might be done with it." And Roderick held one of the candles near the poor lady's head.

She was covered with confusion. "My son, my son," she said, with dignity, "I don't understand you."

In a flash all his old alacrity had come to him. "I suppose a man may admire his own mother!" he cried. "If you please, madam, you will sit to me for that head. I see it, I see it! I will make something that a queen can't get done for her."

Rowland respectfully urged her to assent; he saw Roderick was in the vein, and would probably do something eminently original. She gave her promise at last, after many soft inarticulate protests and a frightened petition that she might be allowed to keep her knitting.

Rowland returned the next day, with plenty of zeal for the part Roderick had assigned to him. It had been arranged that they should go to Saint Peter's. Roderick was in high good-humour, and in the carriage was watching his mother with a fine mixture of filial and professional interest. Mrs. Hudson looked up mistrustfully at the tall shabby houses, and grasped the side of the barouche in her hand, as if she were in a sail-boat in dangerous waters. Rowland sat opposite to Miss Garland. She was totally oblivious of her companions; from the moment the carriage left the hotel she sat gazing wide-eyed and absorbed at the objects about them. If Rowland had felt disposed he might have made a joke

of her intense seriousness. From time to time he told her the name of a place or a building, and she nodded without looking at him. When they emerged into the great square between Bernini's colonnades she laid her hand on Mrs. Hudson's arm and sank back in the carriage, staring up at the vast yellow façade of the church. Inside the church Roderick gave his arm to his mother, and Rowland constituted himself the especial guide of the younger lady. He walked with her slowly everywhere, and made the entire circuit, telling her all he knew of the history of the building. This was a great deal, but she listened attentively, keeping her eyes fixed on the dome. To Rowland himself it had never seemed so radiantly sublime as at these moments; he felt almost as if he had designed it himself, and had a right to be proud of it. He left Mary Garland a while on the steps of the choir, where she had seated herself to rest, and went to join their companions. Mrs. Hudson was watching a great circle of tattered *contadini*, who were kneeling before the image of Saint Peter. The fashion of their tatters fascinated her; she stood gazing at them in a sort of terrified pity, and could not be induced to look at anything else. Rowland went back to Mary and sat down beside her.

"Well, what do you think of Europe?" he asked, smiling.

"I think it's dreadful!" she said, abruptly.

"Dreadful?"

"I feel so strangely—I could almost cry."

"How is it that you feel?"

"So sorry for the poor past, that seems to have died here in my heart in an hour!"

"But, surely, you are pleased—you are interested."

"I am overwhelmed. Here in a single hour everything is changed. It is as if a wall in my mind had been knocked down at a stroke. Before me lies an immense new world, and it makes the old one, the poor

little narrow familiar one I have always known, seem pitiful."

"But you didn't come to Rome to keep your eyes fastened on that narrow little world. Forget it, turn your back on it, and enjoy all this."

"I want to enjoy it; but as I sat here just now, looking up at that golden mist in the dome, I seemed to see in it the vague shapes of certain people and things at home. To enjoy, as you say, as these things demand of one to enjoy them, is to break with one's past. And breaking is a pain!"

"Don't mind the pain, and it will cease to trouble you. Enjoy, enjoy; it is your duty. Yours especially!"

"Why mine especially?"

"Because I am very sure that you have a mind formed to do justice to everything interesting and beautiful. You are extremely intelligent."

"You don't know," said the girl, simply.

"In that matter one *feels*. I really think that I know better than you. I don't want to seem patronising, but I suspect that you are a capital subject for development. Give yourself the best company, trust yourself, let yourself go!"

She looked away from him for some moments, down the gorgeous vista of the great church. "But what you say," she said at last, "means *change!*"

"Change for the better!" cried Rowland.

"How can one tell? As one stands one knows the worst. It seems to me very frightful to develop," she added, with her complete smile.

"One is in for it in one way or another, and one might as well do it with a good grace as with a bad! Since one can't escape life, it is better to take it by the hand."

"Is this what you call life?" she asked.

"What do you mean by 'this'?"

"Saint Peter's—all this splendour, all Rome—pictures, ruins, statues, beggars, monks."

"It is not all of it, but it is a large part of it. All these things are impregnated with life; they are the results of an old and complex civilisation."

"An old and complex civilisation: I am afraid I don't like that."

"Don't conclude on that point just yet. Wait till you have tested it. While you wait you will see an immense number of very beautiful things—things that you are made to understand. They won't leave you as they found you; then you can judge. Don't tell me I know nothing about your understanding. I have a right to count upon it."

Mary gazed a while aloft into the dome. "I am not sure I understand that," she said, nodding upward.

"I hope at least that at a cursory glance it pleases you," said Rowland. "You needn't be afraid to tell the truth. What strikes some people is that it is so remarkably small."

"Oh, it's large enough; it's very wonderful. There are things in Rome, then," she added in a moment, turning and looking at him, "that are very, *very* beautiful?"

"Lots of them."

"Some of the most beautiful things in the world?"

"Unquestionably."

"What are they? which things have most beauty?"

"That is according to taste. I should say the antique sculpture."

"How long will it take to see it all; to know at least something about it?"

"You can see it all, as far as mere seeing goes, in a fortnight. But to know it is a thing for one's leisure. The more time you spend in the midst of it, the more you care for it." After a moment's hesitation he went on, "Why should you grudge time? It's all in your way, since you are to be an artist's wife."

"I have thought of that," she said. "It may be that

I shall always live here, among the most beautiful things in the world!"

"Very possibly! I should like to see you ten years hence."

"I daresay I shall seem greatly altered. But I am sure of one thing."

"Of what?"

"That for the most part I shall be quite the same. I ask nothing better than to believe the fine things you say about my understanding, but even if they are true it won't matter. I shall be what I was made, what I am now—a young woman from the country! The fruit of a civilisation not old and complex, but new and simple."

"I am delighted to hear it; that's an excellent basis."

"Perhaps if you show me anything more you will grow rather tired of my basis. Therefore I warn you."

"I am not frightened. I should like extremely to make a request of you. Be what you are, be what you choose; but *do*, sometimes, as I tell you."

If Rowland was not frightened, neither perhaps was his companion; but she seemed at least slightly disturbed. She proposed that they should join the others.

Mrs. Hudson spoke under her breath; she could not be accused of the want of reverence sometimes attributed to Protestants in the great Catholic temples. "Mary, dear," she whispered, "suppose we had to kiss that dreadful brass toe. If I could only have kept our door-knocker at Northampton as bright as that! I think it's so heathenish; but Roderick says he thinks it's sublime."

Roderick had evidently grown a trifle perverse. "It's sublimer than anything that *your* religion asks you to do!" he exclaimed.

"Surely our religion sometimes gives us very difficult duties," said Mary.

"The duty of sitting in a whitewashed meeting-house and listening to a nasal Puritan! I admit that's difficult. But it's not sublime. I am speaking of ceremonies, of

forms. It is in my line, you know, to make much of forms. I think this is a very beautiful one. Couldn't you do it?" he demanded, looking at his cousin.

She looked back at him intently, and then shook her head. "I think not!"

"Why not?"

"I don't know; I couldn't!"

During this little discussion our four friends were standing near the venerable image of Saint Peter, and a squalid, savage-looking peasant, a tattered ruffian of the most orthodox Italian aspect, had been performing his devotions before it. He turned away crossing himself, and Mrs. Hudson gave a little shudder of horror.

"After that," she murmured, "I suppose he thinks he is as good as any one! And here is another. Oh, what a beautiful person!"

A young lady had approached the sacred effigy, after having wandered away from a group of companions. She kissed the brazen toe, touched it with her forehead, and turned round facing our friends. Rowland then recognised Christina Light. He was stupefied at this indication that she had suddenly embraced the Catholic faith, for it was but a few weeks before that she had treated him to a passionate profession of indifference. Had she entered the Church to put herself *en règle* with what was expected of a Princess Casamassima? While Rowland was mentally asking these questions she was approaching him and his friends on her way to the great altar. At first she did not perceive them.

Mary Garland had been gazing at her. "You told me," she said gently to Rowland, "that Rome contained some of the most beautiful things in the world. This surely is one of them!"

At this moment Christina's eye met Rowland's, and before giving him any sign of recognition she glanced rapidly at his companions. She saw Roderick, but she gave him no bow; she looked at Mrs. Hudson, she

looked at Mary Garland. At Mary Garland she looked fixedly, piercingly, from head to foot, the slow pace at which she advanced making it possible. Then suddenly, as if she had perceived Roderick for the first time, she gave him a charming nod, a radiant smile. In a moment he was at her side. She stopped, and he stood talking to her; she continued to look at Mary.

"Why, Roderick knows her!" cried Mrs. Hudson in an awestruck whisper. "I supposed she was some great princess."

"She is—almost!" said Rowland. "She is the most beautiful girl in Europe, and Roderick has made her bust."

"Her bust? Dear, dear!" murmured Mrs. Hudson, vaguely shocked. "What a strange bonnet!"

"She has very strange eyes," said Mary, turning away.

The two ladies, with Rowland, began to descend towards the door of the church. On their way they passed Mrs. Light, the Cavaliere, and the poodle, and Rowland informed his companions of the relation in which these personages stood to Roderick's young lady.

"Think of it, Mary!" said Mrs. Hudson. "What splendid people he must know! No wonder he found Northampton dull!"

"I like the sad little old gentleman," said Mary.

"Why do you call him sad?" Rowland asked, struck with the observation.

"He seems so!" she answered, simply.

As they were reaching the door they were overtaken by Roderick, whose interview with Miss Light had perceptibly brightened his eye. "So you are acquainted with princesses?" said his mother, softly, as they passed into the portico.

"Miss Light is not a princess!" said Roderick, curtly.

"But Mr. Mallet says so," urged Mrs. Hudson, rather disappointed.

"I meant that she was going to be," said Rowland.

"It's by no means certain that she is even going to be!" Roderick answered.

"Ah," said Rowland, "I give it up!"

XVIII.

RODERICK almost immediately demanded that his mother should sit to him at his studio for her portrait, and Rowland ventured to add another word of urgency. If Roderick's idea had really taken hold of him it was an immense pity his inspiration should be wasted; inspiration in these days had become too precious a commodity. It was arranged, therefore, that for the present, during the mornings, Mrs. Hudson should place herself at her son's service. This involved but little sacrifice, for the good lady's appetite for antiquities was diminutive and bird-like, the usual round of galleries and churches fatigued her, and she was glad to purchase immunity from sight-seeing by a regular afternoon drive. It became natural in this way that Mary Garland having her mornings free, Rowland should propose to be her cicerone. He could not find it in his heart to accuse Roderick of neglect of a girl who was united to him by a double bond, for it was natural that the inspirations of a man of genius should be both capricious and imperious; but of course he wondered how Mary felt, as the young man's promised wife, on being so summarily handed over to another man to be entertained. However she felt, he was certain he should learn very little about it. There had been between them none but indirect allusions to her intended marriage; and Rowland had no desire to discuss it more largely, for he had no quarrel with matters as they stood. They wore the

same elightful aspect through the lovely month of May, and the ineffable charm of Rome at that period seemed but the radiant sympathy of nature with his happy opportunity. The weather was divine; each particular morning, as he walked from his lodging to Mrs. Hudson's modest inn, seemed to have a blessing upon it. The elder lady had usually gone off to the studio, and he found Mary sitting alone at the open window, turning the leaves of some book of artistic or antiquarian reference that he had given her. She always had a smile, she was always eager, alert, responsive. She might be grave by nature, she might be sad by circumstance, she might have secret doubts and pangs, but she was essentially young and strong and fresh and able to enjoy. Her enjoyment was not especially demonstrative, but it was curiously diligent. Rowland felt that it was not amusement and sensation that she coveted, but knowledge—facts that she might noiselessly lay away piece by piece in the fragrant darkness of her serious mind, so that, under this head at least, she should not be a perfectly portionless bride. She never merely pretended to understand; she let things go in her modest fashion at the moment; but she watched them on their way over the crest of the hill, and when her attention seemed not likely to be missed it went hurrying after them and ran breathless at their side and begged them for the secret. Rowland took a high satisfaction in observing that she never mistook the second-best for the best, and that when she was in the presence of a masterpiece she recognised the importance of the occasion. She said many things which he thought very profound—that is, if they really had the fine intention he suspected. This point he usually tried to ascertain; but he was obliged to proceed cautiously, for in her mistrustful shyness it seemed to her that cross-examination must necessarily be ironical. She wished to know just where she was going—what she would gain or lose. This was

partly on account of the purity and rigidity of a mind that had not lived with its door ajar upon the high-road of thought, for passing ideas to drop in and out at their pleasure, but had made much of a few long visits from guests cherished and honoured—guests whose presence was a solemnity. But it was even more because Mary was conscious of a sort of growing self-respect, a sense of devoting her life not to her own ends, but to those of another whose life would be large and brilliant. She had been brought up to think a great deal of "nature" and nature's innocent laws; but now Rowland had talked to her ingeniously of culture; her fresh imagination had responded, and she was pursuing this mysterious object into retreats where the need for some intellectual effort gave her an air of charming tension. She wished to be very sure, to take only the best, knowing it to be the best. There was something exquisite in her pious desire to improve herself, and Rowland encouraged it none the less that its fruits were not for him. In spite of her lurking rigidity and angularity it was very evident that she had a native sense of beauty which only asked to become pliable, and in which already at moments she lost herself delightedly. For all that she was not demonstrative, that her manner was simple and her small-talk of no very ample flow; for all that, as she has said, she was a young woman from the country, and the country was West Nazareth, and West Nazareth was, in its way, a stubborn little fact, she was feeling the direct influence of the great amenities of the world, and they were shaping her with a divinely intelligent touch. "Oh, exquisite virtue of circumstance!" cried Rowland to himself, "that takes us by the hand and leads us forth out of corners where perforce our attitudes are a trifle contracted, and beguiles us into testing unappreciated faculties!" When he said to Mary Garland that he wished he might see her ten years hence, he was paying mentally an equal compliment to circumstance and to

the girl herself. Capacity was there, it could be freely trusted; observation would have but to sow its generous seed. "A superior woman"—the idea had harsh associations, but he watched it imaging itself in the vagueness of the future with a kind of hopeless confidence.

They went a great deal to Saint Peter's, and Mary confessed very speedily that to climb the long low yellow steps, beneath the huge florid façade, and then, pushing the ponderous leathern apron of the door, find oneself a mere sentient point in that brilliant immensity, was a sensation of which the keenness never failed to renew itself. In those days the hospitality of the Vatican had not been curtailed, and it was an easy and delightful matter to pass from the gorgeous church to the solemn company of the antique marbles. Here Rowland had with his companion a great deal of talk, and found himself expounding æsthetics *à perte de vue*. He discovered that she made notes of her likes and dislikes in a new-looking little memorandum book, and he wondered to what extent she reported his own discourse. These were charming hours. The galleries had been so cold all winter that Rowland had been an exile from them; but now that the sun was already scorching in the great square between the colonnades, where the twin fountains flashed almost fiercely, the marble coolness of the long image-bordered vistas made them a delightful refuge. The great herd of tourists had almost departed, and our two friends often found themselves for half an hour at a time in sole and tranquil possession of the beautiful Braccio Nuovo. Here and there was an open window, where they lingered and leaned, looking out into the warm dead air, over the towers of the city, at the soft-hued historic hills, at the stately shabby gardens of the palace, or at some sunny empty grass-grown court lost in the heart of the labyrinthine pile. They went sometimes into the chambers painted by Raphael, and of course

paid their respects to the Sistine Chapel; but Mary's evident preference was to linger among the statues. Once, when they were standing before that noblest of sculptured portraits, the so-called Demosthenes, in the Braccio Nuovo, she made the only spontaneous allusion to her plighted faith that had yet fallen from her lips. "I am so glad," she said, "that Roderick is a sculptor and not a painter."

The allusion resided almost exclusively in the extreme earnestness with which the words were uttered. Rowland asked her the reason of her gladness.

"It's not that painting is not fine," she said, "but that sculpture is finer. It is more manly!"

Rowland tried at times to make her talk about herself, but in this she had little skill. She seemed to him so much older, so much more pliant to social uses than when he had seen her at home, that he wished to make her tell him what she had been doing all those two years. He began by telling her that she was very different. "It appears, then," she said, "that, after all, one can grow in America!"

"Unquestionably, if one has a motive. Your growth, then, was unconscious? You did not watch yourself and water your roots?"

She paid no heed to his question. "I am willing to grant," she said, "that Europe is more delightful than I supposed; and I don't admit that I had thought meanly of its charms. But you must admit that America is better than you had supposed."

"I have not a fault to find with the country which produced you!"

"And yet you want me to change—to assimilate Europe, I suppose, you would call it."

"I have felt that desire only on general principles. Shall I tell you what I feel now? America has made you thus far; let America finish you! I should like to ship you back without delay and see what becomes of

you. That sounds uncivil, and I admit there is a cold intellectual curiosity in it."

She shook her head. "The charm is broken; the thread is snapped! I prefer to remain here."

Invariably, when he was inclined to make of something they were talking of a direct application to herself, she wholly failed to assist him; she made no response. Once, with a spark of ardent irritation, he told her she was very "secretive." At this she coloured a little, and he said that in default of any larger confidence it would at least be a satisfaction to make her confess to that charge. But even this satisfaction she denied him, and his only revenge was in making, two or three times afterwards, a softly ironical allusion to what he called by way of jocosity her slyness. He told her that she was what is termed in French a *sournoise*. "Very good," she answered, almost indifferently, "and now please tell me again—I have forgotten it—what you said an 'architrave' was."

It was on the occasion of her asking him a question of this kind that he charged her—still by way of jocosity, but in a tone in which, if she had been curious in the matter, she might have detected a spark of restless ardour—with having an insatiable avidity for facts. "You are always snatching at information," he said; "you will never consent to have any disinterested conversation."

She frowned a little, as she always did when he arrested their talk upon something personal. But this time she assented, and said that she knew she was eager for facts. "One must make hay while the sun shines," she added. "I must lay up a store of learning against dark days. After all, I can't believe that I shall be always in Rome."

He knew he had divined her real motive; but he felt that if he might have said to her—what it seemed impossible to say—that fortune possibly had a bitter disappointment in store for her, she would have been capable

of answering immediately after the first sense of pain, "Say, then, that I am laying up resources for solitude!"

But all the accusations were not his own. He had been waiting once while they talked—they were differing and arguing a little—to see whether she would take her forefinger out of her *Murray*, into which she had inserted it to keep her place. It would have been hard to say why this point interested him, for he had not the slightest real apprehension that she was dry or pedantic. The simple human truth was that the poor fellow was jealous of science. In preaching science to her he had over-estimated his powers of self-effacement. Suddenly, sinking science for the moment, she looked at him very frankly and began to frown. At the same time she let the *Murray* slide down to the ground, and he was so charmed with this circumstance that he made no movement to pick it up.

"You are uncommonly inconsistent, Mr. Mallet," she said.

"Oh, nothing is more common than inconsistency."

"Not of your elaborate kind. That first day that we were in Saint Peter's you said things that inspired me. You bade me plunge into all this. I was all ready; I only wanted a little push; you gave me a great one; here I am up to my neck! And now, instead of helping me to swim, you stand on the shore—the shore of superior information—and fling pebbles at me!"

"Pebbles, my dear young lady? They are life-preservers? I must have played my part very ill."

"Your part? What is your part supposed to have been?"

He hesitated a moment. "That of usefulness, pure and simple."

"I don't understand you!" she said; and picking up her *Murray* she fairly buried her nose in it.

That evening he said something to her which she perhaps understood as little. "Do you remember my

begging you the other day to do occasionally as I told you? It seemed to me you tacitly consented."

"Very tacitly!"

"I have never yet really presumed on your consent. But now I should like you to do this: whenever you catch me in the act of what you call flinging pebbles, ask me the meaning of some architectural term. I shall know what you mean—a word to the wise!"

One morning they spent among the ruins of the Palatine, that sunny desolation of crumbling overtangled fragments, half excavated and half identified, known as the Palace of the Cæsars. Nothing in Rome is more interesting than this confused and crumbling garden, where you stumble at every step on the disinterred bones of the past; where damp frescoed corridors, relics possibly of Nero's Golden House, serve as gigantic bowers, and where in the spring-time you may sit on a Latin inscription in the shade of a flowering almond-tree and admire the composition of the Campagna. The day left a deep impression on Rowland's mind, partly owing to its intrinsic sweetness, and partly because his companion on this occasion let her *Murray* lie unopened for an hour, and asked several questions which had no connection with the Consuls and the Cæsars. She had begun by saying that it was coming over her, after all, that Rome was a ponderously sad place. The sirocco was gently blowing, the air was heavy, she was tired, she looked a little pale.

"Everything," she said, "seems to say that all things are vanity. If one is doing something, I suppose one feels a certain strength within one to say otherwise. But if one is idle, surely it is depressing to live year after year among the ashes of things that once were mighty. If I were to remain here, I should either become permanently 'low,' as they say, or I would take refuge in some practical occupation."

"What occupation?"

"I would open a school for those beautiful little beggars; though I am sadly afraid I should never bring myself to scold them."

"I have no practical occupation," said Rowland, "and yet I have kept up a certain spirit."

"I don't call you unoccupied."

"It is very good of you. Do you remember our talking about that at Northampton?"

"During that walk in the woods? Perfectly. Has your coming abroad succeeded for yourself as well as you hoped?"

"I think I may say that it has turned out as well as I expected."

"Are you happy?"

"Don't I look so?"

"So it seems to me. But"—and she hesitated a moment—"I imagine you look happy whether you are so or not."

"I am like that ancient comic mask that we saw just now in yonder excavated fresco; I am made to grin."

"Shall you come back here next winter?"

"Very probably."

"Are you settled here for ever?"

"'For ever' is a long time. I live only from year to year."

"Shall you never marry?"

Rowland gave a laugh. "'For ever'—'never!' You handle large ideas. I have not taken a vow of celibacy."

"Shouldn't you like to marry?"

"I should like it immensely."

To this she made no rejoinder; but presently she asked, "Why don't you write a book?"

Rowland laughed—this time more freely. "A book! What book should I write?"

"A history; something about art or antiquities."

"I have neither the learning nor the talent."

She made no attempt to contradict him; she simply said she had supposed otherwise. "You ought, at any rate," she continued in a moment, "to do something for yourself."

"For myself? I should have supposed that if ever a man seemed to live for himself——"

"I don't know how it seems," she interrupted—"to careless observers. But we know—we know that you have lived—a great deal for *us*."

Her voice trembled slightly, and she brought out the last words with a little jerk.

"She has had that speech on her conscience," thought Rowland; "she has been thinking she owed it to me, and it seemed to her that now was her time to make it and have done with it."

She went on in a way which confirmed these reflections, speaking with due solemnity. "You ought to be made to know very well what we all feel. Mrs. Hudson tells me that she has told you what she feels. Of course Roderick has expressed himself. I have been wanting to thank you too; I do, from my heart."

Rowland made no answer; his face at this moment resembled the tragic mask much more than the comic. But Mary was not looking at him; she had taken up her eternal *Murray*.

In the afternoon she usually drove with Mrs. Hudson, but Rowland frequently saw her again in the evening. He was apt to spend half an hour in the little sitting-room at the hôtel-pension on the slope of the Pincian, and Roderick, who dined regularly with his mother, was present on these occasions. Rowland saw him little at other times, and for three weeks no observations passed between them on the subject of Mrs. Hudson's advent. To Rowland's vision, as the weeks elapsed, the benefits to proceed from the presence of the two ladies remained shrouded in mystery. Roderick was peculiarly inscrutable. He was preoccupied with his work on his mother's portrait, which

was taking a very happy turn; and often when he sat silent with his hands in his pockets, his legs outstretched, his head thrown back and his eyes on vacancy, it was to be supposed that his fancy was hovering about the half-shaped image in his studio, exquisite even in its immaturity. He said little, but his silence did not of necessity imply disaffection, for he evidently found it a deep personal luxury to lounge away the hours in an atmosphere so charged with feminine tenderness. He was not alert, he suggested nothing in the way of excursions (Rowland was the prime mover in such as were attempted), but he conformed, passively at least, to the tranquil temper of the two women, and made no harsh comments nor sombre allusions. Rowland wondered whether he had, after all, done his friend injustice in denying him the sentiment of duty. He refused invitations, to Rowland's knowledge, in order to dine at the sordid little table-d'hôte; wherever his spirit might be, he was present in the flesh with religious constancy. Mrs. Hudson's felicity betrayed itself in a remarkable tendency to finish her sentences and wear her best black silk gown. Her tremors had trembled away; she was like a child who discovers that the shaggy monster it has so long been afraid to touch is an inanimate terror compounded of straw and sawdust, and that it is even a safe audacity to tickle its nose. As to whether the love-knot of which Mary Garland had the keeping still held firm, who should pronounce? The young girl, as we know, did not wear it on her sleeve. She always sat at the table, near the candles, with a piece of needlework. This was the attitude in which Rowland had first seen her, and he thought, now that he had seen her in several others, that it was not the least becoming.

XIX.

THERE occurred at last a couple of days during which Rowland was unable to go to the hotel. Late in the evening of the second Roderick came into his room. In a few moments he announced that he had finished the bust of his mother.

"And it's magnificent!" he declared. "It's one of the best things I have done."

"I am delighted to hear it," said Rowland. "Never again talk to me about your inspiration being dead."

"Why not? This may be its last kick! I feel very tired. But it's a masterpiece, though I do say it. They tell us we owe so much to our parents. Well, I have paid the filial debt handsomely!" He walked up and down the room a few moments, with the purpose of his visit evidently still hanging fire. "There's one thing more I want to say," he presently resumed. "I feel as if I ought to tell you!" He stopped before Rowland with his head high and his brilliant glance unclouded. "Your invention is a failure!"

"My invention?" Rowland repeated.

"Bringing out my mother and Mary."

"A failure?"

"It's no use! They don't help me."

Rowland had fancied that Roderick had no more surprises for him; but he was now staring at him wide-eyed.

"They bore me!" Roderick went on.

"Oh, oh!" cried Rowland.

"Listen, listen!" said Roderick, with perfect gentleness. "I am not complaining of them; I am simply stating a fact. I am very sorry for them; I am greatly disappointed."

"Have you given them a fair trial?"

"Shouldn't you say so? It seems to me I have behaved beautifully."

"You have done very well; I have been building great hopes on it."

"I have done too well, then. After the first forty-eight hours my own hopes collapsed. But I determined to fight it out; to stand within the temple; to let the spirit of the Lord descend! Do you want to know the result? Another week of it and I shall begin to hate them. I shall want to poison them."

"Miserable boy!" cried Rowland. "They are the most perfect of women!"

"Very likely! But they mean no more to me than a Bible text means to an atheist!"

"I can say this," said Rowland, in a moment. "I don't pretend to understand the state of your relations with Miss Garland."

Roderick shrugged his shoulders and let his hands drop at his sides. "She adores me! That's the state of my relations." And he smiled strangely.

"Have you broken off your engagement?"

"Broken it off? You can't break a ray of moonshine."

"Have you absolutely no affection for her?"

Roderick placed his hand on his heart and held it there a moment. "Dead—dead—dead!" he said at last.

"I wonder," Rowland observed presently, "if you really know what a charming girl she is. She's an awfully charming girl."

"Evidently—or I should not have cared for her!"

"Don't you care for her now, then?"

"Oh, don't force a fellow to say rude things!"

"Well, I can only say that you don't know what you are giving up."

Roderick gave a quickened glance. "Do *you* know so well?"

"You must admit that you have allowed me time to find out!"

Roderick smiled, I may almost say sympathetically. "Well, you haven't wasted it!"

Rowland's thoughts were crowding upon him fast. If Roderick was resolute, why should he be gainsaid? If Mary was to be sacrificed, why in *that* way try to save her? There was another way; it only needed a little presumption to make it possible. Rowland tried to summon presumption to his aid; but whether it should come or not it was to find conscience there before it. Conscience had only three words, but they were cogent. "For *her* sake—for *her* sake," it dumbly murmured, and Rowland resumed his argument. "I don't know what I wouldn't do," he said, "rather than that Miss Garland should be ill-used."

"There is one thing to be said," Roderick answered, reflectively. "She is very strong."

"Well, then, if she's strong, believe that with a longer chance, a better chance, she will still regain your affection."

"Do you know what you ask?" cried Roderick. "Make love to a girl I hate?"

"You *hate*?"

"As her lover I should hate her! Do you really urge my marrying a woman who would bore me to death? I shouldn't be long in letting her know it, and then, pray, where would she be?" Roderick asked, impatiently.

Rowland walked the length of the room a couple of times and then stopped suddenly. "Go your way, then! Say all this to *her*, not to me!"

"To her? I am afraid of her; I want you to help me."

"My dear Roderick," said Rowland, with an eloquent smile, "I can't help you any more!"

Roderick frowned, hesitated a moment, and then took his hat. "Oh, well," he said, "I am not so afraid of her as all that!" And he turned as if to depart.

"Stop!" cried Rowland, as he laid his hand on the door.

Roderick paused, and stood waiting with his irritated brow.

"Come back; sit down there and listen to me. Of anything you say in your present state of mind you will live most bitterly to repent. You don't know what you really think; you don't know what you really feel. You don't know your own mind; you don't do justice to Miss Garland. All this is impossible here, under these circumstances. You are blind, you are deaf, you are under a spell. To break it you must leave Rome."

"Leave Rome! Rome was never so dear to me."

"That's not of the smallest consequence. Leave it instantly."

"And where shall I go?"

"Go to some place where you may be alone with your mother and your cousin."

"Alone? You will not come?"

"Oh, if you wish it I will come."

Roderick, inclining his head a little, looked at his friend askance. "I don't understand you," he said; "I wish you liked Mary either a little less or a little more."

Rowland felt himself colouring, but he paid no heed to this speech. "You ask me to help you," he went on. "On these present terms I can do nothing. But if you will be perfectly quiet with regard to Miss Garland for a couple of months, and meanwhile leave Rome, leave Italy, I will do what I can to 'help you,' as you say, in the event of your still wishing to be liberated."

"I must do without your help, then! Your terms are impossible. I will leave Rome at the time I have always intended—at the end of June. My rooms and my mother's are taken till then; all my arrangements are made accordingly. Then I will go—not before."

"You are not frank," said Rowland. "Your real reason for staying has nothing to do with your rooms."

Roderick's face betrayed neither embarrassment nor resentment. "If I am not frank, it's for the first time in my life. Since you know so much about my real reason, let me hear it! No, stop!" he suddenly added, "I won't trouble you. You are right, I have a motive. On the twenty-fourth of June Christina Light is to be married. I take an immense interest in all that concerns her, and I wish to be present at her marriage."

"But you said the other day at Saint Peter's that it was by no means certain it would take place."

"Apparently I was wrong; I am told that the invitations are going out."

Rowland felt that it would be vain to remonstrate, and that the only thing for him was to make the best bargain possible. "If I offer no farther opposition to your waiting for Christina's marriage," he said, "will you promise, meanwhile and afterwards, for a certain period, to defer to my judgment—to say or do nothing that may give the alarm to Miss Garland?"

"For a certain period? What period?" Roderick demanded.

"Ah, don't screw me down so! Don't you understand that I have taken you away from her, that I suffer in every nerve in consequence, and that I must do what I can to give you back?"

"Do what you can, then," said Roderick, putting out his hand. "Do what you can!" His tone and his hand-shake seemed to constitute a promise, and upon this they parted.

Roderick's bust of his mother, whether or no it were a discharge of what he called the filial debt, was at least an admirable production. Rowland at the time it was finished met Gloriani one evening, and this unscrupulous genius immediately began to ask questions about it. "I am told our high-flying friend has come down," he said. "He has been doing a queer little old woman."

"A queer little old woman!" Rowland exclaimed. "My dear sir, she is Hudson's mother."

"All the more reason for her being queer! It is a bust for terra-cotta, eh?"

"By no means; it is for marble."

"That's a pity. It was described to me as a charming piece of quaintness; a little demure, thin-lipped old lady, with her head on one side and the prettiest wrinkles in the world—a sort of fairy godmother."

"Go and see it, and judge for yourself," said Rowland.

"No, I see I shall be disappointed. It's quite the other thing, the sort of thing they put into the campo-santos. I wish that crazy boy would listen to me for ten minutes!"

But a day or two later Rowland met him again in the street, and, as they were near, proposed they should adjourn to Roderick's studio. He consented, and on entering they found the young master. Roderick's demeanour to Gloriani was never conciliatory, and on this occasion blank indifference was apparently all he had to offer. But Gloriani, like a genuine connoisseur, cared nothing for his manners; he cared only for his skill. In the bust of Mrs. Hudson there was something almost touching; it was an exquisite example of a ruling sense of beauty. The poor lady's small, neat, timorous face had certainly no great character, but Roderick had produced its sweetness, its mildness, its minuteness, its still maternal passion, with the most unerring art. The thing was perfectly unflattered, and yet admirably tender; it was the poetry of fidelity. Gloriani stood looking at it a long time intently. Roderick wandered away into the neighbouring room.

"I give it up!" said the sculptor at last. "I don't understand it."

"But you like it?" said Rowland.

"Like it? It's a pearl of pearls. Tell me this," he added; "is he very fond of his mother—is he a

very good son?" And he gave Rowland a sharp look.

"Why, she adores him," said Rowland, smiling.

"That's not an answer! But it's none of my business. Only if I, in his place, being suspected of having—what shall I call it?—a cold heart, managed to do that piece of work, oh, oh! I should be called a pretty lot of names. Charlatan, *poseur*, *arrangeur!* But he can do as he chooses! My dear young man, I know you don't like me," he went on as Roderick came back. "It's a pity; you are strong enough not to care about me at all. You are very strong."

"Not at all," said Roderick, curtly. "I am very weak!"

"I told you last year that you wouldn't keep it up. I was a great ass. You will!"

"I beg your pardon—I won't!" retorted Roderick.

"Though I'm a great ass all the same, eh? Well, call me what you will, so long as you turn out this sort of thing! I don't suppose it makes any particular difference, but I should like to say now that I believe in you."

Roderick stood looking at him for a moment with a strange hardness in his face. It flushed slowly, and two glittering angry tears filled his eyes. It was the first time Rowland had ever seen them there; he saw them but once again. Poor Gloriani, he was sure, had never in his life spoken with less of the mocking spirit; but to Roderick there was evidently a touch of sarcasm in his profession of faith. He turned away, muttering a passionate imprecation. Gloriani was accustomed to deal with complex problems, but this time he was hopelessly puzzled. "What's the matter with him?" he asked, simply.

Rowland gave a sad smile and touched his forehead. "Genius, I suppose."

Gloriani sent another parting, lingering look at the bust of Mrs. Hudson. "Well, it's deuced perfect, it's

deuced simple; I *do* believe in him!" he said. "But I am glad I am not a genius. It makes," he added, with a laugh, as he looked for Roderick to wave him good-bye and saw his back still turned, "it makes a more sociable studio!"

Rowland had purchased, as he supposed, temporary tranquillity for Mary Garland; but his own humour in these days was not especially peaceful. He was attempting, in a certain sense, to lead the ideal life, and he found it at the least not easy. The days passed, but brought with them no official invitation to Christina Light's wedding. He occasionally met her, and he occasionally met Prince Casamassima; but the two were always separate; they were apparently taking their happiness in the inexpressive and isolated manner proper to people of social eminence. Rowland continued to see Madame Grandoni, for whom he felt a confirmed esteem. He had always talked to her with frankness, but now he made her a confidant of all his hidden dejection. Roderick and Roderick's concerns had been a common theme with him, and it was in the natural course to talk of Mrs. Hudson's arrival and Mary Garland's fine smile. Madame Grandoni was an intelligent listener, and she lost no time in putting his case for him in a nutshell. "At one moment you tell me the girl is plain," she said; "the next you tell me she is pretty. I will invite them, and I shall see for myself. But one thing is very clear; you are in love with her!"

Rowland for all answer glanced round to see that no one heard her.

"More than that," she added, "you have been in love with her these two years. There was that certain something about you! . . . I knew you were of what we Germans call a subjective turn of mind; but you had a touch of it more than was natural. Why didn't you tell me at once? You would have saved me a great deal of trouble. And poor Augusta Blanchard too!" And

herewith Madame Grandoni communicated a pertinent fact: Augusta Blanchard and Mr. Leavenworth were going to make a match. The young lady had been staying for a month at Albano, and as Mr. Leavenworth had been dancing attendance the event was a matter of course. Rowland, who had been lately reproaching himself with a failure of attention to Miss Blanchard's doings, made some such observation.

"But you did not find it so!" cried his hostess. "It was a matter of course, perhaps, that Mr. Leavenworth, who seems to be going about Europe with the sole view of picking up furniture for his 'home,' as he calls it, should think Miss Blanchard a very handsome *morceau*; but it was not a matter of course—or it needn't have been—that she should be willing to become a sort of superior table ornament. She would have accepted you if you had tried."

"You are supposing the insupposable," said Rowland. "She never gave me a particle of encouragement."

"What would you have had her do? The poor girl did her best, and I am sure that when she accepted Mr. Leavenworth she thought of you."

"She thought of the pleasure her marriage would give me."

"Ay, pleasure indeed! She is a thoroughly good girl, but she has her little grain of feminine spite, as well as the rest. Well, he is richer than you, and she will have what she wants; but before I forgive you I must wait and see this new arrival—what do you call her?—Miss Garland. If I like her I will forgive you; if I don't I shall always bear you a grudge."

Rowland answered that he was sorry to forfeit any advantage she might offer him, but that his exculpatory passion for Miss Garland was a figment of her fancy. Miss Garland was engaged to another man—he himself had no claims.

"Well, then," said Madame Grandoni, "if I like her

we will have it that you ought to be in love with her. If you fail in this it will be a double misdemeanour. The man she has accepted doesn't care a straw for her. Leave me alone, and I will tell her what I think of the man she hasn't!"

As to Christina Light's marriage Madame Grandoni could say nothing positive. The young girl of late had made her several flying visits, in the intervals of the usual pre-matrimonial shopping and dress-fitting; she had spoken of the event with a toss of her head, as a matter which with a wise old friend who viewed things in their essence she need not pretend to treat as a solemnity. It was for Prince Casamassima to do that. "It is what they call a marriage of reason," she once said. "That means, you know, a marriage of madness!"

"What have you said in the way of advice?" Rowland said.

"Very little, but that little has been a good word for the Prince. I know nothing of the mysteries of the young lady's heart. It may be a gold-mine, but at any rate it's at the bottom of a very long shaft. But the marriage in itself is an excellent marriage. It's not only brilliant, but it's safe. I think Christina is quite capable of making it a means of misery; but there is no position that would be sacred to her. Casamassima is an irreproachable young man; there is nothing against him but that he is a prince. It is not often, I fancy, that a prince has been put through his paces at this rate. No one knows the wedding-day; the cards of invitation have been printed half a dozen times over with a different date; each time Christina has destroyed them. There are people in Rome who are furious at the delay; they want to get away; they are in a dreadful fright about the fever, but they are dying to see the wedding, and if the day were fixed, they would make their arrangements to wait for it. I think it very possible that after having kept them for a month and been the cause of a dozen

cases of malaria, Christina will be married at sunrise by an old friar, with simply the legal witnesses."

"It is true, then, that she has become a Catholic?"

"So she tells me. One day she got up in the depths of despair; at her wits' end, I suppose, in other words, for a new sensation. Suddenly it occurred to her that the Catholic Church might, after all, hold the key—might give her what she wanted; she sent for a priest; he happened to be a clever man, and he contrived to interest her. She put on a black dress and a black veil, and, looking handsomer than ever, she rustled into the Catholic church. The Prince, who is very devout and who had her heresy sorely on his conscience, was thrown into an ecstasy. May she never have a caprice that pleases him less!"

Rowland had already asked Madame Grandoni what to her perception was the present state of matters between Christina and Roderick; and he now repeated his question with some earnestness of apprehension. "The girl is so deucedly drâmatic," he said, "that I don't know what *coup de théâtre* she may have in store for us. Such a stroke was her turning Catholic; such a stroke would be her some day making her curtsey to a disappointed world as Princess Casamassima, married *en famille.* She might do—she may do—something that would make even more starers! I am prepared for anything."

"You mean that she might run away with your sculptor, eh?"

"I am prepared for anything!"

"Do you mean that he's ready?"

"Do you think that *she* is?"

"They're a precious pair! This is what I think. You by no means exhaust the subject when you say that Christina is dramatic. It's my belief that in the course of her life she will do a certain number of things from disinterested passion. She's immeasurably proud, and if

that is often a fault in a good woman, it may be a merit in a naughty one. She needs to think well of herself; she knows a fine character easily when she meets one; she hates to suffer by comparison, even though the comparison be made by herself alone; and when the estimate she may have made of herself grows vague she needs to do something to give it a definite impressive form. What she will do in such a case will be better or worse, according to her opportunity; but I imagine it will generally be something that will drive her mother to despair; something of the sort usually termed 'unworldly.'"

Rowland, as he was taking his leave, after some further exchange of opinions, rendered Christina the tribute of a deeply meditative sigh. "She has bothered me half to death," he said, "but somehow I can't manage as I ought to hate her. I admire her half the time, and a good part of the rest I pity her."

"I think, as a general thing, I pity her!" said Madame Grandoni.

This enlightened woman came the next day to call upon the two ladies from Northampton. She carried their shy affections by storm, and made them promise to drink tea with her on the evening of the morrow. Her visit was an epoch in the life of poor Mrs. Hudson, who did nothing but make sudden desultory allusions to her for the next thirty-six hours. "To think of her being a foreigner!" she would exclaim, after much intent reflection over her knitting; "she speaks so beautifully!" Then in a little while, "She wasn't so much dressed as you might have expected. Did you notice how easy it was in the waist? I wonder if that's the fashion?" Or, "She's very old to wear a hat; I should never dare to wear a hat!" Or, "Did you notice her hands?—very pretty hands for such a stout person. A great many rings, but nothing very handsome. I suppose they are hereditary." Or, "She's certainly not handsome, but she looks wonderfully clever. I wonder why she doesn't

have something done to her teeth." Rowland also received a summons to Madame Grandoni's tea-drinking, and went betimes, as he had been requested. He was eagerly desirous to lend his mute applause to Mary Garland's *début* in the Roman social world. The two ladies had arrived with Roderick, silent and careless, in attendance. Miss Blanchard was also present, escorted by Mr. Leavenworth, and the party was completed by a couple of dozen artists of both sexes and various nationalities. It was a friendly and easy assembly, like all Madame Grandoni's parties, and in the course of the evening there was some excellent music. People played and sang for Madame Grandoni on easy terms who elsewhere were not to be heard for the asking. She was herself a superior musician, and singers found it a privilege to perform to her accompaniment. Rowland talked to various persons, but for the first time in his life his attention visibly wandered; he could not keep his eyes off Mary Garland. Madame Grandoni had said that he sometimes spoke of her as pretty and sometimes as plain; to-night if he had had occasion to describe her appearance he would have called her beautiful. She was dressed more than he had ever seen her; it was becoming, and gave her a deeper colour and a brighter presence. Two or three persons were apparently witty people, for she sat listening to them with her brilliant natural smile. Rowland, from an opposite corner, reflected that he had never varied in his appreciation of Miss Blanchard's classic contour, but that somehow to-night it impressed him hardly more than an effigy stamped upon a coin of low value. Roderick could not be accused of rancour, for he had approached Mr. Leavenworth with unstudied familiarity, and lounging against the wall with hands in pockets, was discoursing to him with candid serenity. Now that he had done him an impertinence he evidently found him less intolerable. Mr. Leavenworth stood stirring his tea and silently opening and shutting his mouth, without looking at the

young sculptor, like a large drowsy dog snapping at flies. Rowland had found it disagreeable to be told Miss Blanchard would have married him for the asking, and he would have felt some embarrassment in going to speak to her if his modesty had not found incredulity so easy. The facile side of a union with Miss Blanchard had never been present to his mind; it had struck him as a thing, in all ways, to be compassed with a great effort. He had half an hour's talk with her; a farewell talk, as it seemed to him—a farewell not to a real illusion, but to the idea that for him in that matter there could ever be an acceptable *pis-aller*. He congratulated Miss Blanchard upon her engagement, and she received his good wishes with a touch of primness. But she was always a trifle prim, even when she was quoting Mrs. Browning and George Sand, and this harmless defect did not prevent her responding on this occasion that Mr. Leavenworth had a "glorious heart." Rowland wished to manifest an extreme regard, but towards the end of the talk his zeal relaxed, and he fell a-thinking that a certain natural ease in a woman was the most delightful thing in the world. There was Christina Light, who had too much, and here was Miss Blanchard, who had too little, and there was Mary Garland, who had just the right amount.

He went to Madame Grandoni in an adjoining room, where she was pouring out tea.

"I will make you an excellent cup," she said, "because I have forgiven you."

He looked at her, answering nothing; but he swallowed his tea with great gusto and a slight deepening of his colour; by all of which one would have known that he was gratified. In a moment he intimated that, in so far as he had sinned, he had forgiven himself.

"She is a delightful creature," said Madame Grandoni. "She has all sorts of qualities. I have taken a great fancy to her; she must let me make a friend of her."

"She is very plain," said Rowland, slowly, "very simple, very ignorant."

"Which, being interpreted, means, 'She is very handsome, very subtle, and has read hundreds of volumes on winter evenings in the country.'"

"You are a veritable sorceress," cried Rowland; "you frighten me away!" As he was turning to leave her, there rose above the hum of voices in the drawing-room the sharp grotesque note of a barking dog. Their eyes met in a glance of intelligence.

"There is the sorceress!" said Madame Grandoni. "The sorceress and her necromantic poodle!" And she hastened back to the post of hospitality.

Rowland followed her, and found Christina Light standing in the middle of the drawing-room and looking about in perplexity. Her poodle, sitting on his haunches and gazing at the company, had apparently been expressing a sympathetic displeasure at the absence of a welcome. But in a moment Madame Grandoni had come to the young girl's relief, and Christina had tenderly kissed her hostess.

"I had no idea," said Christina, surveying the assembly, "that you had such a lot of grand people, or I would not have come in. The servant said nothing; he took me for an *invitée*. I came to spend a neighbourly half-hour; you know I haven't many left! It was too dismally dreary at home. I hoped I should find you alone, and I brought Stenterello to play with the cat. I don't know that if I had known about all this I should have dared to come in; but since I have stumbled into the midst of it I beg you to let me stay. I am not dressed, but am I very hideous? I will sit in a corner and no one will notice me. My dear sweet lady, do let me stay! Pray, why didn't you ask me? I never have been to a little party like this. They must be very charming. No dancing—tea and conversation? No tea, thank you; but if you could spare a biscuit for Stenterello; a sweet

biscuit, please. Really, why didn't you ask me? Do you have these things often? Madame Grandoni, it's very unkind!" And the young girl, who had delivered herself of the foregoing succession of sentences in her usual low, cool, penetrating voice, uttered these last words with a certain tremor of feeling. "I see," she went on, "I do very well for balls and great banquets, but when people wish to have a cosy, friendly, comfortable evening, they leave me out with the big flower-pots and the gilt candlesticks."

"I am sure you are welcome to stay, my dear," said Madame Grandoni, "and at the risk of displeasing you I must confess that if I didn't invite you it was because you are too grand. Your dress will do very well, with its fifty flounces, and there is no need of your going into a corner. Indeed, since you are here, I propose to have the glory of it. You must remain where my people can see you."

"They are evidently determined to do that by the way they stare. Do they think I intend to dance a *tarantella*? Who are they all; do I know them?" And lingering in the middle of the room, with her arm passed into Madame Grandoni's, she let her eyes wander slowly from group to group. They were, of course, observing her. Standing in the little circle of lamplight, with the hood of an Eastern burnous shot with silver threads falling back from her beautiful head, one hand gathering together its voluminous shimmering folds, and the other playing with the silken top-knot on the uplifted head of her poodle, she was a figure of radiant picturesqueness. She seemed to be a sort of extemporised *tableau vivant*. Rowland's position made it becoming for him to speak to her without delay. As she looked at him he saw that, judging by the light of her beautiful eyes, she was in a humour of which she had not yet treated him to a specimen. In a simpler person he would have called it exquisite kindness; but in this young lady's deportment

the flower was one thing and the perfume another. "Tell me about these people," she said to him. "I had no idea there were so many people in Rome I have not seen. What are they all talking about? It's all very clever, I suppose, and quite beyond me. There is Miss Blanchard sitting as usual in profile against a dark object. She is like a head on a postage stamp. And there is that nice little old lady in black, Mrs. Hudson. What a dear little woman for a mother! *Comme elle est proprette!* And the other, the *fiancée*, of course, she's here. Ah, I see!" She paused; she was looking intently at Mary Garland. Rowland measured the intentness of her glance, and suddenly acquired a conviction. "I should like so much to know her!" she said, turning to Madame Grandoni. "She has a charming face; I am sure she is a kind of saint. I wish very much you would introduce me. No, on second thoughts, I would rather you didn't. I will speak to her bravely myself, as a friend of her—what do you call it in English?—her *promesso*." Madame Grandoni and Rowland exchanged glances of baffled conjecture, and Christina flung off her burnous, crumpled it together, and with uplifted finger, tossing it into a corner, gave it in charge to her poodle. He stationed himself upon it on his haunches with upright vigilance. Christina crossed the room with the step and smile of a ministering angel, and introduced herself to the young lady from Northampton. She had once told Rowland that she would show him some day how gracious her manners could be; she was now redeeming her promise. Rowland, watching her, saw Mary Garland rise slowly in response to her greeting, and look at her with serious deep-gazing eyes. The almost dramatic opposition of these two keenly interesting girls touched Rowland with a nameless apprehension, and after a moment he preferred to turn away. In doing so he noticed Roderick. The young sculptor was standing planted on the train of a lady's dress, gazing across

at Christina's movements with undisguised earnestness. There were several more pieces of music; Rowland sat in a corner and listened to them. When they were over several people began to take their leave, Mrs. Hudson among the number. Rowland saw her come up to Madame Grandoni, clinging shyly to Mary Garland's arm. Mary had a brilliant eye and a deep colour in her cheek. The two ladies looked about for Roderick, but Roderick had his back turned. He had approached Christina, who, with an absent air, was sitting alone, where she had taken her place near her innocent rival, looking at the guests pass out of the room. Christina's eye, like Mary's, was bright, but her cheek was pale. Hearing Roderick's voice, she looked up at him sharply; then silently, with a single quick gesture, she motioned him away. He obeyed her, and came and joined his mother in bidding good-night to Madame Grandoni. Christina in a moment met Rowland's glance and immediately beckoned him to come to her. He was familiar with her spontaneity of movement, and was not particularly surprised. She made a place for him on the sofa beside her; he wondered what was coming now. He was not sure it was not a mere fancy, but it seemed to him that he had never seen her look just as she was looking then. It was a humble, touching, appealing glance, which threw into wonderful relief the nobleness of her beauty. "How many more metamorphoses," he asked himself, "am I to be treated to before we have done?"

"I want to tell you," said Christina, "I have taken an immense fancy to Miss Garland. Aren't you glad?"

"Delighted!" exclaimed poor Rowland.

"Ah, you don't believe it," she said, with soft dignity. "Is it so hard to believe?"

"Not that people in general should admire her, but that I should. But I want to tell you; I want to tell some one, and I can't tell Miss Garland herself. She

thinks me already a horrid false creature, and if I were to express to her frankly what I think of her I should simply disgust her. She would be quite right; she has repose, and from that point of view I and my doings must seem monstrous. Unfortunately I haven't repose. I am trembling now; if I could ask you to feel my arm, you would see! But I want to tell you that I admire Miss Garland more than any of the people who call themselves her friends—except, of course, you. Oh, I know that! To begin with, she is extremely handsome, and she doesn't know it."

"She is not generally thought handsome," said Rowland.

"Evidently! That's the vulgarity of the human mind. Her head has great character, great natural style. If a woman is not to be a brilliant beauty in the regular way, she will choose, if she's wise, to look like that. She will not be thought pretty by people in general, and desecrated, as she passes, by the stare of every vile wretch who chooses to thrust his nose under her bonnet; but a certain number of intelligent people will find it one of the delightful things of life to look at her. That lot is as good as another! Then she has a beautiful character!"

"You found that out soon!" said Rowland, smiling.

"How long did it take *you?* I found it out before I ever spoke to her. I met her the other day in Saint Peter's; I knew it then. I knew it—do you want to know how long I have known it?"

"Really," said Rowland, "I didn't mean to cross-examine you."

"Do you remember mamma's ball in December? We had some talk, and you then mentioned her—not by name. You said but three words, but I saw you admired her, and I knew that if you admired her she must have a beautiful character. That's what you require!"

"Upon my word," cried Rowland, "you make three words go very far!"

"Oh, Mr. Hudson has also spoken of her."

"Ah, that's better!" said Rowland.

"I don't know; he doesn't like her."

"Did he tell you so?" The question left Rowland's lips before he could stay it, which he would have done on a moment's reflection.

Christina looked at him intently. "No!" she said at last. "That would have been dishonourable, wouldn't it? But I know it from my knowledge of him. He doesn't like perfection; he is not bent upon being *safe* in his likings; he is willing to risk something! Poor fellow, he risks too much!"

Rowland was silent; he did not care for the thrust; but he was profoundly mystified. Christina beckoned to her poodle, and the dog marched stiffly across to her. She gave a loving twist to his rose-coloured top-knot and bade him go and fetch her burnous. He obeyed, gathered it up in his teeth, and returned with great solemnity, dragging it along the floor.

"I do her justice. I do her full justice," she went on, with soft earnestness. "I like to say that, I like to be able to say it. She is full of intelligence and courage and devotion. She doesn't do me a grain of justice; but that is no harm. There is something so fine in the aversions of a good woman!"

"If you would give Miss Garland a chance," said Rowland, "I am sure she would be glad to be your friend."

"What do you mean by a chance? She has only to take it. I told her I liked her immensely, and she frowned as if I had said something disgusting. She looks very handsome when she frowns." Christina rose with these words and began to gather her mantle about her. "I don't often like women," she went on. "In fact I generally detest them. But I should like to know that one well. I should like to have a friendship with her; I have never had one; they must be very delightful.

But I sha'n't have one now—not if she can help it! Ask her what she thinks of me; see what she will say. I don't want to know; keep it to yourself. It's too sad. So we go through life. It's fatality—that's what they call it, isn't it? We please the people we don't care for, we displease those we do! But I appreciate her, I do her justice; that's the most important thing. It's because I have imagination. She has none. Never mind; it's her only fault. I do her justice; I understand very well." She kept softly murmuring and looking about for Madame Grandoni. She saw the good lady near the door, and put out her hand to Rowland for good-night. She held his hand an instant, fixing him with her eyes, the living splendour of which at this moment was something transcendent. "Yes, I do her justice," she repeated. "And you do her more; you would lay down your life for her." With this she turned away, and before he could answer she left him. She went to Madame Grandoni, grasped her two hands, and held out her forehead to be kissed. The next moment she was gone.

"That was a happy accident!" said Madame Grandoni. "She never looked so beautiful, and she made my little party brilliant."

"Beautiful verily!" Rowland answered. "But it was no accident."

"What was it, then?"

"It was a plan. She wished to see Mary Garland. She knew she was to be here."

"How so?"

"By Roderick evidently."

"And why did she wish to see Mary Garland?"

"Heaven knows! I give it up!"

"Ah, the wicked girl!" murmured Madame Grandoni.

"No," said Rowland; "don't say that now. She's too beautiful."

"Oh, you men—the best of you!"

"Well, then," cried Rowland, "she's too good!"

XX.

THE opportunity presenting itself the next day, he failed not, as you may imagine, to ask Mary Garland what she thought of Christina. It was a Saturday afternoon, the time at which the beautiful marbles of the Villa Borghese are thrown open to the public. Mary had told him that Roderick had promised to take her to see them with his mother, and he joined the party in the splendid Casino. The warm weather had left so few strangers in Rome that they had the place almost to themselves. Mrs. Hudson had confessed to an invincible fear of treading, even with the help of her son's arm, the polished marble floors, and was sitting patiently on a stool, with folded hands, looking shyly here and there at the undraped paganism around her. Roderick had sauntered off alone, with an irritated brow which seemed to betray the conflict between the instinct of observation and the perplexities of circumstance. His cousin was wandering in another direction, and though she was consulting her catalogue, Rowland fancied it was from habit; she, too, was preoccupied. He joined her, and she presently sat down on a divan rather wearily and closed her *Murray*. Then he asked her abruptly how Christina had pleased her.

She started the least bit at the question, and he felt that she had been thinking of Christina.

"I don't like her!" she said, drily.

"What do you think of her?"

"I think she's false." This was said without petulance or bitterness, but with a very positive air.

"But she wished to please you; she tried," Rowland rejoined in a moment.

"I think not. She wished to please herself!"

Rowland felt himself at liberty to say no more. No allusion to Christina had passed between them since the

day they met her at Saint Peter's, but he knew that she knew, by that infallible sixth sense of a woman who loves, that this strange and beautiful girl had the power to injure her. To what extent she had the will Mary was uncertain; but last night's interview apparently had not reassured her. It was under these circumstances equally unbecoming for Rowland either to depreciate or to defend Christina, and he had to content himself with simply having verified the girl's own assurance that she had made a bad impression. He tried to talk of indifferent matters—about the statues and the frescoes; but to-day plainly æsthetic curiosity, on his companion's part, had folded its wings. Curiosity of another sort had taken its place. Mary was longing, he was sure, to question him about Christina; but she found a dozen reasons for hesitating. Her questions would imply that Roderick had not treated her with confidence; for information on this point should properly have come from himself. They would imply that she was jealous, and to betray her jealousy was intolerable to her pride. For some minutes, as she sat scratching the brilliant pavement with the point of her umbrella, it was to be supposed that her pride and her anxiety held an earnest debate. At last anxiety won.

"*À propos* of Miss Light," she asked, "do you know her well?"

"I can hardly say that. But I have seen her repeatedly."

"Do you like her?"

"Yes and no. I think I am sorry for her."

Mary had spoken with her eyes on the pavement. At this she looked up. "Sorry for her? Why?"

"Well—she is unhappy."

"What are her miseries?'

"Well—she has a horrible mother and she has had a most injurious education."

For a moment Mary was silent. Then, "Isn't she very beautiful?" she asked.

"Don't you think so?"

"That's measured by what men think! She is extremely clever too."

"Oh yes—speaking as men think!"

"She has beautiful dresses."

"Any number of them."

"And beautiful manners."

"Yes—sometimes."

"And plenty of money."

"Money enough apparently."

"And she receives great admiration."

"Very true."

"And she is to marry a prince."

"So they say."

Mary rose and turned to rejoin her companions, commenting these admissions with a pregnant silence. "Poor Miss Light!" she said at last simply. And in this it seemed to Rowland there was a touch of serious mockery.

Very late on the following evening his servant brought him the card of a visitor. He was surprised at a visit at such an hour, but it may be said that when he read the inscription—Cavaliere Giuseppe Giacosa—his surprise abated. He had had an unformulated conviction that there was to be a sequel to the apparition at Madame Grandoni's; the Cavaliere had come to usher it in.

He had come evidently on a portentous errand. He was as pale as ashes, and prodigiously serious; his little cold black eye had grown ardent, and he had left his insinuating smile at home. He saluted Rowland, however, with his usual expressiveness.

"You have more than once done me the honour to invite me to call upon you," he said. "I am ashamed of my long delay, and I can only say to you frankly that my time this winter has not been my own." Rowland assented, ungrudgingly, fumbled for the Italian correlative of the adage "Better late than never," begged him to be seated, and offered him a cigar. The Cavaliere sniffed

imperceptibly the fragrant weed, and then declared that if his kind host would allow him he would reserve it for consumption at another time. He apparently desired to intimate that the solemnity of his errand left him no breath for idle smoke-puffings. "I must confess," he observed, "that even now I come on business not of my own—or my own at least only in a secondary sense. I have been despatched as an ambassador—an envoy extraordinary, I may say—by my dear friend, Mrs. Light."

"If I can in any way be of service to Mrs. Light, I shall be happy," Rowland said.

"Well then, dear sir, Casa Light is in commotion. The signora is in trouble—in terrible trouble." For a moment Rowland expected to hear that the signora's trouble was of a nature that a loan of five thousand francs would assuage. But the Cavaliere continued—"Miss Light has committed a great crime; she has plunged a dagger into the heart of her mother."

"A dagger!" cried Rowland.

The Cavaliere patted the air an instant with his finger-tips. "I speak figuratively. She has broken off her marriage."

"Broken it off?"

"Short! She has turned the Prince from the door." And the Cavaliere, when he had made this announcement, folded his arms and bent upon Rowland his intense inscrutable gaze. It seemed to Rowland that he detected in the polished depths of it a fantastic gleam of irony or of triumph; but, superficially at least, Giacosa did nothing to discredit his character as a sympathetic representative of Mrs. Light's affliction.

Rowland heard his news with a kind of fierce disgust; it seemed the sinister counterpart of Christina's preternatural mildness at Madame Grandoni's assembly. She had been too plausible to be honest. Without being able to trace the connection, he yet instinctively associated her present rebellion with her meeting with Mary

Garland. If she had not seen Mary, she would have let things stand. It was monstrous to suppose that she could have sacrificed so brilliant a fortune to a mere movement of jealousy, to a refined impulse of feminine devilry, to a desire to frighten poor Mary from her security by again appearing in the field. Yet Rowland remembered his first impression of her; she was "dangerous," and she had measured in each direction the perturbing effect of her rupture. She was smiling her sweetest smile at it! For half an hour Rowland simply detested her—he longed to denounce her to her face. Of course, all he could say to Giacosa was that he was extremely sorry. "But I am not surprised," he added.

"You are not surprised?"

"With Miss Light everything is possible. Isn't that true?"

Another ripple seemed to play for an instant in the current of the old man's irony, but he made no answer. "It was a magnificent marriage," he said at last. "I do not respect many people, but I respect Prince Casamassima."

"I should judge him, indeed, to be a very honourable young man," said Rowland.

"Eh, young as he is, he is made of the old stuff. And now perhaps he's blowing his brains out. He is the last of his house; it's a great house. But Miss Light will have put an end to it!"

"Is that the view she takes of it?"

This time unmistakably the Cavaliere smiled, but still in that very out-of-the-way place. "You have observed Miss Light with attention," he said, "and this brings me to my errand. Mrs. Light has a high opinion of your wisdom, of your kindness, and she has reason to believe you have great influence with her daughter."

"I—with her daughter? Not a grain!"

"That is possibly your modesty. Mrs. Light believes that something may yet be done, and that Christina will

listen to you. She begs you to come and see her before it is too late."

"But all this, my dear Cavaliere, is none of my business," Rowland objected. "I can't possibly in such a matter take the responsibility of advising Miss Light."

The Cavaliere fixed his eyes for a moment on the floor, in brief but intense reflection. Then looking up, "Unfortunately," he said, "she has no man near her whom she respects; she has no father!"

"And such a finished fool of a mother!" Rowland gave himself the satisfaction of exclaiming.

The Cavaliere was so pale that he could not easily have turned paler; yet it seemed for a moment that his dead complexion blanched. "Eh, signore, such as she is, the mother appeals to you. A very handsome woman —dishevelled, in tears, in despair, in dishabille!" Rowland reflected a moment, not on the attractions of Mrs. Light under the circumstances indicated by the Cavaliere, but on the satisfaction he should take in accusing Christina to her face of having struck a cruel blow.

"I must add," said the Cavaliere, "that Mrs. Light desires also to speak to you on the subject of Mr. Hudson."

"She considers Mr. Hudson connected with this step of her daughter's?"

"Intimately. He must be got out of Rome."

"Mrs. Light, then, must get an order from the Pope to remove him. It's not in my power."

The Cavaliere assented deferentially. "Mrs. Light is equally helpless. She would leave Rome to-morrow, but Christina would not budge. An order from the Pope would do nothing. A bull in council would do nothing."

"She is a remarkable young lady!" said Rowland, with bitterness.

But the Cavaliere rose and responded coldly, "She has a great spirit." And it seemed to Rowland that her

great spirit, for mysterious reasons, gave him more pleasure than the distressing use she made of it gave him pain. He was on the point of charging him with his inconsistency, when Giacosa went on—"But if the marriage can be saved, it must be saved. It's a beautiful marriage. It *will* be saved."

"Notwithstanding Miss Light's great spirit to the contrary?"

"Miss Light, notwithstanding her great spirit, will call Prince Casamassima back."

"Heaven grant it!" said Rowland.

"I don't know," said the Cavaliere, solemnly, "that Heaven will have much to do with it."

Rowland gave him a questioning look, but he laid his finger on his lips. And with Rowland's promise to present himself on the morrow at Casa Light, he shortly afterwards departed. He left Rowland revolving many things: Christina's magnanimity, Christina's perversity, Roderick's contingent fortune, Mary Garland's certain trouble, and the Cavaliere's own fine ambiguities.

Rowland's promise to the Cavaliere obliged him to disengage himself from an excursion which he had arranged with the two ladies from Northampton. Before going to Casa Light he repaired in person to Mrs. Hudson's hotel to make his excuses.

He found Roderick's mother sitting with tearful eyes, staring at an open note that lay in her lap. At the window sat Mary Garland, who turned upon him as he came in a gaze both anxious and familiar. Mrs. Hudson quickly rose and came to him holding out the note.

"In pity's name, what is the matter with my boy? If he is ill, I entreat you to take me to him!"

"He is not ill to my knowledge," said Rowland. "What have you there?"

"A note—a dreadful note. He tells us we are not to see him for a week. If I could only go to his room! But I am afraid, I am afraid!"

"I imagine there is no need of going to his room. What is the occasion, may I ask, of his note?"

"He was to have gone with us on this drive to—what is the place?—to Cervara. You know it was arranged yesterday morning. In the evening he was to have dined with us. But he never came, and this morning arrives this awful thing. Oh dear, I'm so excited! Would you mind reading it?"

Rowland took the note and glanced at its half-dozen lines. "I cannot go to Cervara," they ran; "I have something else to do. This will occupy me perhaps a week, and you will not see me. Don't miss me—learn not to miss me. R. H."

"Why, it means," Rowland explained, "that he has taken up a piece of work, and that it is all-absorbing. That's very good news." This explanation was not sincere; but he had not the courage not to offer it as a stop-gap. But he found he needed all his courage to support it, for Mary had left her place and approached him, formidably unsatisfied.

"He does not work in the evening," said Mrs. Hudson. "Can't he come for five minutes? Why does he write such a cruel cold note to his poor mother—to poor Mary? What have we done that he acts so strangely? It's this wicked, infectious, heathenish place!" And the poor lady's suppressed mistrust of the Eternal City broke out passionately. "Oh, dear Mr. Mallet," she went on, "I am sure he has the fever, and he's already delirious!"

"I am very sure it's not that," said Mary, softly.

She was still looking at Rowland; his eyes met hers and his own glance wandered away. This made him angry, and to carry off his confusion he pretended to be looking meditatively at the floor. After all, what had *he* to be ashamed of? For a moment he was on the point of making a clean breast of it, of crying out, "Good ladies, I abdicate; I can't help you!" But he

checked himself; he felt so impatient to have his three words with Christina. He grasped his hat.

"I will see what it is!" he cried. And then he was glad he had not abdicated, for as he turned away he glanced again at Mary, and saw that, though her eyes were full of trouble, they were not hard and accusing, but charged with appealing friendship.

He went straight to Roderick's apartment, deeming this, at an early hour, the safest place to seek him. He found him in his sitting-room, which had been closely darkened to keep out the heat. The carpets and rugs had been removed, the floor of speckled concrete was bare, and lightly sprinkled with water. Here and there, over it, certain strongly-odorous flowers had been scattered. Roderick was lying on his divan in a white dressing-gown, staring up at the frescoed ceiling. The room was deliciously cool, and filled with the moist sweet fragrance of the circumjacent roses and violets. All this seemed highly fantastic, and yet Rowland hardly felt surprised.

"Your mother was greatly alarmed at your note," he said, "and I came to satisfy myself that, as I believed, you are not ill."

Roderick lay motionless except that he slightly turned his head towards his friend. He was smelling a large white rose, which he continued to present to his nose. In the darkness of the room he looked exceedingly pale, but his handsome eyes had an extraordinary brilliancy. He let them rest for some time on Rowland, lying there like a Bhuddist in an intellectual swoon, whose perception should be slowly ebbing back to temporal matters. "Oh, I am not ill," he said at last. "I have never been better."

"Your note, nevertheless, and your absence have very naturally alarmed your mother. I advise you to go to her directly and reassure her."

"Go to her? Going to her would be worse than

staying away. Staying away at present is a kindness." And he inhaled deeply his huge rose, looking up over it at Rowland. "My presence, in fact, would be indecent."

"Indecent? Pray explain."

"Why, you see, as regards Mary Garland. I am divinely happy! Doesn't it strike you? You ought to agree with me. You wish me to spare her feelings; I spare them by staying away. Last night I heard something——"

"I heard it too," said Rowland, with brevity. "And it's in honour of this piece of news that you have taken to your bed in this fashion?"

"Extremes meet! I can't get up for joy."

"May I inquire how you heard your joyous news?—from Miss Light herself?"

"By no means. It was brought me by her maid, who is in my service as well."

"Casamassima's loss, then, is to a certainty your own gain?"

"I don't talk about certainties. I don't want to be arrogant, I don't want to offend the immortal gods. I am keeping very quiet, but I can't help being happy. I shall wait a while; I shall bide my time."

"And then?"

"And then that incomparable girl will confess to me that when she threw overboard her Prince she remembered that I adore her!"

"I feel bound to tell you," was in the course of a moment Rowland's response to this speech, "that I am now on my way to Mrs. Light's."

"I congratulate you, I envy you!" Roderick murmured, imperturbably.

"Mrs. Light has sent for me to remonstrate with her daughter, with whom she has taken it into her head that I have an influence. I don't know to what extent I shall remonstrate, but I give you notice I shall not speak in your interest."

Roderick looked at him for a moment with a lazy radiance in his eyes. "Pray, don't!" he simply answered.

"You deserve I should tell her you are a very shabby fellow."

"My dear Rowland, the comfort with you is that I can trust you. You are incapable of doing anything disloyal."

"You mean to lie here, then, smelling your roses and nursing your visions and leaving your mother and Miss Garland to eat their hearts out?"

"Can I go and flaunt my felicity in their faces? Wait till I get used to it a trifle. I have done them a villainous wrong, but I can at least forbear to add insult to injury. I may be an arrant fool, but for the moment I have taken it into my head to be prodigiously pleased. I shouldn't be able to conceal it; my pleasure would offend them; so I lock myself up as a dangerous character."

"Well, I can only hope that your pleasure may never grow less or your danger greater!"

Roderick closed his eyes again and sniffed at his rose. "God's will be done!"

On this Rowland left him and repaired directly to Mrs. Light's. This afflicted lady hurried forward to meet him. Since the Cavaliere's visit to Rowland she had taken a reef, as the saying is, in her distress, but she was evidently still in high agitation, and she clutched Rowland by his two hands as if in the shipwreck of her hopes he were her single floating spar. Rowland greatly pitied her, for there is something respectable in passionate grief, even in a very bad cause; and as pity is akin to love he felt rather more tolerant of her fantastic pretensions than he had done hitherto.

"Speak to her, plead with her, command her!" she cried, pressing and shaking his hands. "She'll not heed *us*, no more than if we were a pair of running fountains. Perhaps she will listen to you; she always liked you."

"She always disliked me," said Rowland. "But that

doesn't matter now. I have come here simply because you sent for me—not because I can help you. I can't advise your daughter."

"Oh, cruel, deadly man! You *must* advise her; you sha'n't leave this house till you have advised her!" the poor woman passionately retorted. "Look at me in my misery, and refuse to help me! You needn't be afraid, I know I'm a fright, I haven't an idea what I have on. If this goes on she and I may both as well turn scare-crows. If ever a woman was desperate, frantic, heart-broken, such a woman speaks to you now! I can't begin to tell you. To have nourished a serpent, sir, all these years! To have lavished one's self upon a viper that turns and stings her own poor mother! To have toiled and prayed, to have pushed and struggled, to have eaten the bread of bitterness, and gone through fire and water—and at the end of all things to find myself at this pass! It can't be, it's too cruel, such things don't happen, the Lord don't allow it. I'm a religious woman, sir, and the Lord knows all about me. With His own hand He had given me His reward! I would have lain down in the dust and let her walk over me; I would have given her the eyes out of my head if she had taken a fancy to them. No, she's a cruel, wicked, heartless, unnatural girl! I speak to you, Mr. Mallet, in my dire distress, as to my *only* friend. There isn't a creature here that I can look to—not one of them all that I have faith in. But I always admired *you*. I said to Christina the first time I saw you that you were a perfect gentleman, and very different from some! Come, don't disappoint me now! I feel so terribly alone, you see; I feel what a nasty hard heartless world it is that has come and devoured my dinners and danced to my fiddles, and yet that hasn't a word to throw to me in my agony. Oh, the money alone that I have put into this thing would melt the heart of a Turk!"

During this frenzied outbreak Rowland had had time

to look round the room and to see the Cavaliere sitting in a corner, like a major-domo on the divan of an antechamber, pale, rigid, inscrutable.

"I have it at heart to tell you," Rowland said, "that if you consider my friend Hudson—"

Mrs. Light gave a toss of her head and hands. "Oh, it's not that! She told me last night to bother her no longer with Hudson. Hudson, forsooth! She didn't care a button for Hudson. I almost wish she did; then perhaps one might understand it. But she doesn't care for anything in the wide world except to do her own hard wicked will, and to crush me and shame me with her cruelty."

"Ah, then," said Rowland, "I am as much at sea as you, and my presence here is an impertinence. I should like to say three words to Miss Light on my own account. But I must wholly decline to talk to her about Prince Casamassima. This is simply impossible."

Mrs. Light burst into angry tears. "Because the poor boy is a prince, eh? because he's of a great family and has an income of millions, eh? That's why you grudge him and hate him. I knew there were vulgar people of that way of feeling, but I didn't expect it of *you*. Make an effort, Mr. Mallet; rise to the occasion; forgive the poor fellow his advantages. Be just, be reasonable! It's not *his* fault, and it's not mine. He's the best, the kindest young man in the world, and the most correct and moral and virtuous! If he were standing here in rags I would say it all the same. The man first—the money afterwards: that was always my motto —ask the Cavaliere. What do you take me for? Do you suppose I would give Christina to a *vicious* person? do you suppose I would sacrifice my precious child, little comfort as I have in her, to a man against whose character a syllable could be breathed? Casamassima is only too good, he's a saint of saints, he's stupidly good! There isn't such another in the length and breadth of

Europe. What he has been through in this house not a common peasant would endure. Christina has treated him as you wouldn't treat a dog. He has been insulted, outraged, persecuted! He has been driven hither and thither till he didn't know where he was. He has stood there where you stand—there, with his name and his millions and his devotion—as white as your handkerchief, with hot tears in his eyes, and me ready to go down on my knees to him and say, 'My own sweet Prince, I could kiss the ground you tread on, but it isn't decent that I should allow you to enter my house and expose yourself to these horrors again.' And he would come back, and he would come back, and go through it all again, and take all that was given him, and only want the girl the more! I was his confidant; I know everything. He used to beg my own forgiveness for Christina. What do you say to that? I seized him once and kissed him, I did! To find that and to find all the rest with it, and to believe that it was a gift straight from the pitying angels of Heaven, and then to see it dashed away before your eyes and to stand here helpless—oh, it's a fate I hope you may ever be spared!"

"It would seem, then, that in the interest of Prince Casamassima himself I ought to refuse to interfere," said Rowland.

Mrs. Light looked at him hard, slowly drying her eyes. The intensity of her grief and anger gave her a kind of majesty, and Rowland for the moment felt ashamed of the somewhat grim humour of his observation.

"Very good, sir," she said. "I am sorry your heart is not so tender as your conscience. My compliments to your conscience! It must give you great happiness. Heaven help me! Since you fail us we are indeed driven to the wall. But I have fought my own battles before and I have never lost courage; and I don't see why I should break down now. Cavaliere, come here!"

Giacosa rose at her summons and advanced with his usual deferential alacrity. He shook hands with Rowland in silence.

"Mr. Mallet refuses to say a word," Mrs. Light went on. "Time presses, every moment is precious. Heaven knows what that poor boy may be doing. If at this moment a clever woman should get hold of him she might be as ugly as she could! It's horrible to think of it."

The Cavaliere fixed his eyes on Rowland, and his look, which the night before had been singular, was now most extraordinary in its mixture of fine anxiety—an anxiety which seemed to plead against the young man's reluctance—and mocking exultation.

Suddenly and vaguely Rowland felt the presence of a new element in the drama that was going on before him. He looked from the Cavaliere to Mrs. Light, whose eyes were now quite dry and were fixed in stony hardness on the floor.

"If you could bring yourself," the Cavaliere said, in a low, soft, tenderly-urgent voice, "to address a few words of solemn remonstrance to Miss Light, you would perhaps do more for us than you know. You would save several persons a great deal of pain. The dear signora first, and then Christina herself. Christina in particular. Me too, I might take the liberty to add!"

There was to Rowland something acutely touching in this humble petition. He had always felt a sort of imaginative tenderness for poor little unexplained Giacosa, and these words seemed a supreme manifestation of the mysterious obliquity of his life. All of a sudden as he watched the Cavaliere something occurred to him; it was something very odd, and it stayed his glance suddenly from again turning to Mrs. Light. His idea embarrassed him, and to carry off his embarrassment, he repeated that it was folly to suppose that *his* words would have any weight with Christina.

The Cavaliere stepped forward and laid two fingers

on Rowland's breast. "Do you wish to know the truth? You are the only man whose words she remembers."

Rowland was going from surprise to surprise. "I will say what I can!" he said. By this time he had ventured to glance at Mrs. Light. She was looking at him askance, as if upon this she were suddenly mistrusting his motives.

"If you fail," she said, sharply, "we have something else! But please to lose no time."

She had hardly spoken when the sound of a short sharp growl caused the company to turn. Christina's fleecy poodle stood in the middle of the great drawing-room with his muzzle lowered, in pompous defiance of the three conspirators against the comfort of his mistress. This young lady's claims for him seemed justified; he was an animal of amazing shrewdness. He had preceded Christina as a sort of vanguard of defence, and she now slowly advanced from a neighbouring room.

"You will be so good as to listen to Mr. Mallet," her mother said, in a terrible voice, "and to reflect carefully on what he says. I suppose you will admit that *he* is disinterested. In half an hour you shall hear from me again!" And passing her hand through the Cavaliere's arm she swept rapidly out of the room.

Christina looked hard at Rowland, but offered him no greeting. She was very pale, and, strangely enough, it at first seemed to Rowland that her beauty was in eclipse. But he very soon perceived that it had only changed its character, and that if it was a trifle less brilliant than usual it was admirably touching and noble. The clouded light of her eyes, the magnificent gravity of her features, the conscious erectness of her head, might have belonged to a deposed sovereign or a condemned martyr. "Why have you come here at this time?" she asked.

"Your mother sent for me in pressing terms, and I was very glad to have an opportunity to speak to you."

"Have you come to help me or to persecute me?"

"I have as little power to do one as I have desire to do the other. I came in great part to ask you a question. First, is your decision irrevocable?"

Christina's two hands had been hanging clasped in front of her; she separated them and flung them apart by an admirable gesture.

"Would you have done this if you had not seen Mary Garland?"

She looked at him with quickened attention; then suddenly, "This is interesting!" she cried. "Let us have it out." And she flung herself into a chair and pointed to another.

"You don't answer my question," Rowland said.

"You have no right that I know of to ask it. But it's a very clever one; so clever that it deserves an answer. Very likely I should not."

"Last night when I said that to myself I was extremely angry."

"Oh dear, and you are not angry now?"

"I am less angry."

"How very tiresome! But you can say something at least."

"If I were to say what is uppermost in my mind, I should say that face to face with you it is never possible to condemn you."

"*Perchè?*"

"You know yourself! But I can at least say now what I felt last night. It seemed to me that you had consciously cruelly dealt a blow at that poor girl. Do you understand?"

"Wait a moment!" And with her eyes fixed on him she inclined her head on one side meditatively. Then a cold brilliant smile covered her face, and she made a gesture of negation. "I see your train of reasoning, but it's quite wrong. I meant no harm to Miss Garland; I should be extremely sorry to make her suffer. Tell me you believe that."

This was said with ineffable candour. Rowland heard himself answering, "I believe it!"

"And yet in a sense your supposition was true," Christina continued. "I took into my head, as I told you, to be greatly struck with the *fiancée*, and I frankly confess I was jealous of her. What I envied her was simply her character! I said to myself, 'She in my place wouldn't marry Casamassima.' I could not help saying it, and I said it so often that I found a kind of inspiration in it. I hated the idea of being worse than she—of doing something that she would not do. I might be bad by nature, but I needn't be by intention. The end of it all was that I found it impossible not to tell the Prince that I was his very humble servant, but that decidedly I could not marry him."

"Are you sure it was only of Miss Garland's character that you were jealous, not of—not of——"

"Speak out, I beg you. We are talking philosophy!"

"Not of her affection for her cousin?"

"*Sure* is a good deal to ask. Still, I think I may say it! There are two reasons; one, at least, I can tell you: her affection has not a shadow's weight with Mr. Hudson! Why, then, should one feel it?"

"And what is the other reason?"

"Excuse me; that is my own affair."

Rowland was puzzled, baffled, charmed, inspired. "I have promised your mother," he presently went on, "to say something in favour of Prince Casamassima."

She shook her head sadly. "Prince Casamassima needs nothing that you can say for him. He is a magnificent *parti*. I know it perfectly."

"You know also of the extreme affliction of your mother?"

"Her affliction is demonstrative. She has been abusing me for the last twenty-four hours as if I were the vilest of the vile." To see Christina sit there in the purity of her beauty and say this might have made one

bow one's head with a kind of awe. "I have failed of respect to her at other times, but I have not done so now. Since we are talking philosophy," she pursued, with a gentle smile, "I may say it's a simple matter! I don't love that excellent Prince. It's very true, however, that making up one's mind that one doesn't love a Prince is rather a complicated operation! I spoke just now of inspiration. The inspiration has been great, but —I frankly confess it—the decision has been hard. Shall I tell you?" she demanded, with sudden ardour; "will you understand me? It was on the one side the world, the splendid, beautiful, powerful, interesting world. I know what that is; I have tasted of the cup, I know its sweetness. Ah, if I chose, if I should let myself go, if I should fling everything to the winds, the world and I would be famous friends! I know its merits, and I think without vanity it would see mine. You should see some fine things! I should like to be a princess, and I think I should be a very good one; I would play my part well. I am fond of luxury, I am fond of a great society, I am fond of being looked at. I am corrupt, corrupting, corruption! Ah, what a pity that couldn't be too! Mercy of Heaven!" There was a passionate tremor in her voice; she covered her face with her hands and sat motionless. Rowland saw that an intense agitation, hitherto successfully repressed, underlay the exquisite archness of her manner, and he could easily believe that her battle had been fierce. She rose quickly and turned away, walked a few paces and stopped. In a moment she was facing him again with tears in her eyes and a flush in her cheeks. "But you needn't think I am afraid!" she said. "I have chosen, and I shall hold to it. I have something here, here, *here!*" and she patted her heart. "It's my own. I shall not part with it. Is it what you call an ideal? I don't know; I don't care! It is brighter than the Casamassima diamonds!"

"You say that certain things are your own affair," Rowland presently rejoined; "but I must nevertheless make an attempt to learn what all this means—what it promises for my friend Hudson. Is there any hope for him?"

"This is a point I can't discuss with you minutely. I like him very much."

"Would you marry him if he were to ask you?"

"He has asked me."

"And if he asks again?"

"I shall marry no one just now."

"Roderick," said Rowland, "has great hopes."

"Does he know of my rupture with the Prince?"

"He is making a great holiday of it."

Christina pulled her poodle towards her and began to smooth his silky fleece. "I like him very much," she repeated; "much more than I used to. Since you told me all that about him at St. Cecilia's I have felt a great friendship for him. There is something very fine about him; he is not afraid of anything. He is not afraid of failure; he is not afraid of ruin or death."

"Poor fellow!" said Rowland, bitterly; "he is inconveniently picturesque."

"Picturesque, yes; that's what he is. I am very sorry for him."

"Your mother told me just now that you had said that you didn't care a button for him."

"Very likely! I meant as a lover. One doesn't want a lover one pities, and one doesn't want—of all things in the world—a picturesque husband! I should like Mr. Hudson as something else. I wish he were my brother, so that he could never talk to me of marriage. Then I could adore him. I would nurse him, I would wait on him and save him all disagreeable rubs and shocks. I am much stronger than he, and I would stand between him and the world. Indeed, with Mr. Hudson for my brother I should be willing to live and die an old maid!"

"Have you ever told him all this?"

"I suppose so; I have told him five hundred things! If it will please you I will tell him again."

"Oh, Heaven forbid!" cried poor Rowland with a groan.

He was lingering there, weighing his sympathy against his irritation and feeling it sink in the scale, when the curtain of a distant doorway was lifted and Mrs. Light passed across the room. She stopped half-way and gave our interlocutors a flushed and menacing look. It found apparently little to reassure her, and she moved away with a passionate toss of her drapery. Rowland thought with horror of the sinister compulsion to which the young girl was apparently still to be subjected. In this ethereal flight of her moral nature there was a certain painful effort and tension of wing; but it was none the less piteous to imagine her being rudely jerked down to the base earth. She would need all her magnanimity for her own contest, and it seemed gross to make farther demands upon it on Roderick's behalf.

Rowland took up his hat. "You asked a while ago if I had come to help you," he said. "If I knew how I might help you I should be particularly glad."

She stood silent a moment, reflecting. Then at last looking up, "You remember your promising six months ago to tell me what you should finally think of me? I should like you to tell me now."

He could hardly help smiling. Madame Grandoni had insisted on the fact that Christina was an actress, and this little speech seemed a glimpse of the cothurnus. She had played her great scene, she had made her point, and now she had her eye at the hole in the curtain and she was watching the house! But she blushed as she perceived his smile, and her blush, which was beautiful, made her fault venial.

"You are an excellent girl!" he said, very positively; and then gave her his hand in farewell.

There was a great chain of rooms in Mrs. Light's apartment, the pride and joy of the hostess on festal evenings, through which the departing visitor passed before reaching the door. In one of the first of these Rowland found himself waylaid and arrested by the distracted mistress of the house.

"Well, well?" she cried, seizing his arm. "Has she listened to you—have you moved her?"

"In Heaven's name, dear madam," Rowland begged, "leave the poor girl alone! She is behaving very well!"

"Behaving very well? Is that all you have to tell me? I don't believe you said a proper word to her. You are conspiring together to kill me!"

Rowland tried to soothe her, to remonstrate, to persuade her that it was equally cruel and unwise to try to force matters. But she answered him only with harsh lamentations and imprecations, and ended by telling him that her daughter was her own property, and that his interference was insolent and scandalous. Her disappointment seemed really to have blighted her wits, and his only possible rejoinder was to take a summary departure.

A moment later he came upon the Cavaliere, who was sitting with his elbows on his knees, and his head in his hands, so buried in thought that Rowland had to call him before he roused himself. Giacosa looked at him a moment keenly, and then gave an interrogative shake of the head.

Rowland gave a shake negative, to which the Cavaliere responded by a long melancholy sigh. "But her mother is determined to put on the screw," said Rowland.

"It seems that it must be!"

'Do you consider that it must be?"

"I don't differ with Mrs. Light!"

"It will be a great cruelty!"

The Cavaliere gave a tragic shrug. "Eh! it isn't an easy world."

"You should do nothing to make it harder, then."

"What will you have? It's a magnificent marriage."

"You disappoint me, Cavaliere," said Rowland. "I imagined you appreciated the great elevation of Christina's attitude. She doesn't love the Prince; she has let the matter stand or fall by that."

The old man grasped him by the hand, and stood a moment with averted eyes. At last, looking at him, he held up two fingers.

"I have two hearts," he said; "one for myself, one for the world. This one is furious with the blessed *ragazza*—the other is enchanted with her! One suffers horribly at what the other does."

"I don't understand double people, Cavaliere," Rowland said, "and I don't pretend to understand you. But I have guessed you are going to play some secret card."

"That card is Mrs. Light's, not mine," said the Cavaliere.

"It's a menace, at any rate?"

"The sword of Damocles! It hangs by a hair. Christina is to be given ten minutes to recant, under penalty of feeling it fall. On the blade there is something written—in strange characters. Don't scratch your head; you will not make it out."

"I think I have guessed it," said Rowland, after a comprehensive silence. The Cavaliere looked at him blankly, but intently, and Rowland added, "Though there are some signs, indeed, I don't understand."

"Puzzle them out at your leisure," said the Cavaliere, shaking his hand. "I hear Mrs. Light; I must go to my post. I wish you were a Catholic; I would beg you to step into the first church you come to, and pray for us the next half-hour."

"For 'us'? For whom?"

"For all of us. At any rate remember this—I delight in the Christina!"

Rowland heard the rustle of Mrs. Light's dress; he turned away, and the Cavaliere went, as he said, to his post. Rowland for the next couple of days kept thinking of the sword of Damocles.

XXI.

Of Roderick meanwhile he saw nothing; but he immediately went to Mrs. Hudson, and assured her that her son was in even exceptionally good health and spirits. After this he called again on the two ladies from Northampton, but as Roderick's absence continued, he was able to be neither comforting nor comforted. Mary's apprehensive face seemed to him an image of his own state of mind. He was deeply depressed, he felt that there was a storm in the air, and he wished it would come and wash away their troubles. On the afternoon of the third day he went into Saint Peter's, his frequent resort whenever the outer world was disagreeable. From a heart-ache to a Roman rain there were few contrarieties the great church did not help him to forget. He had wandered there for half an hour, when he came upon a short figure lurking in the shadow of one of the piers. He saw it was that of an artist hastily transferring to his sketch-book a memento of some fleeting variation in the scenery of the basilica; and in a moment he perceived that the artist was little Sam Singleton.

Singleton pocketed his sketch-book with a guilty air, as if it cost his modesty a pang to be detected in this greedy culture of opportunity. Rowland always enjoyed meeting him; talking with him in these days was as good as a wayside gush of clear cold water on a long hot walk. There was perhaps no drinking-vessel, and you had to apply your lips to some informal conduit; but the result

was always a sense of extreme moral refreshment. On this occasion he mentally blessed the ingenuous little artist, and heard presently with regret that he was to leave Rome on the morrow. Singleton had come to bid farewell to Saint Peter's, and he was gathering a few last impressions. He had earned a pocketful of money, and he was meaning to take a summer's holiday; going to Switzerland, to Germany, to Paris. In the autumn he was to return home; his family—composed, as Rowland knew, of a father, who was cashier in a bank, and five unmarried sisters, one of whom gave lyceum lectures on woman's rights, the whole resident at Buffalo, New York—had been writing him peremptory letters, and appealing to him as a son, brother, and fellow-citizen. He would have been grateful for another year in Rome, but he submitted to destiny the more patiently that he had laid up treasure, which in Buffalo would seem infinite. They talked some time; Rowland hoped they might meet in Switzerland, and take a walk or two together. Singleton seemed to feel that Buffalo had marked him for her own; he was afraid he should not see Rome again for many a year.

"So you expect to live at Buffalo?" Rowland inquired, looking down the splendid avenue of the nave.

"Well, it will depend upon the views—upon the attitude—of my family," Singleton replied. "Oh, I think I shall get on; I think it can be done. If I find it can be done, I shall really be quite proud of it; as an artist, of course, I mean, you know. Do you know I have some nine hundred sketches? I shall live in my portfolio. And so long as one is not in Rome, pray what does it matter where one is? But how I shall envy all you Romans—you and Mr. Gloriani—and Mr. Hudson especially."

"Don't envy Hudson; he has nothing to envy."

Singleton chuckled at what he considered a harmless jest. "Yes, he's going to be the great man of our time!

And I say, Mr. Mallet, isn't it a mighty comfort that it's *we* who have turned him out?"

"Between ourselves," murmured Rowland, "he has disappointed me."

Singleton stared open-mouthed. "Dear me, what did you expect?"

"Verily," said Rowland to himself, "what did I expect?"

"I confess," cried Singleton, "I can't judge him rationally. He fascinates me; he's the sort of man one makes one's hero of."

"Strictly speaking, he is not a hero," Rowland remarked.

Singleton looked intensely grave, and with almost tearful eyes, "Is there anything amiss—anything out of the way about him?" he timidly asked. Then as Rowland hesitated to reply he quickly added, "Please, if there is, don't tell me! I want to know no evil of him, and I think I should hardly believe it. In my memories of this Roman artist life he will be the central figure. He will stand there in radiant relief, as beautiful and unspotted as one of his own statues!"

"Amen!" said Rowland, gravely. He remembered afresh that the sea is inhabited by big fishes and little, and that the latter often find their way down the throats of the former. Singleton was going to spend the afternoon in taking last looks at certain other places, and Rowland offered to join him on his sentimental circuit. But as they were preparing to leave the church he heard himself suddenly addressed from behind. Turning, he beheld a young woman, whom he immediately recognised as Madame Grandoni's maid. Her mistress was present, she said, and begged to confer with him before he departed.

This summons obliged Rowland to separate from Singleton, to whom he bade farewell. He followed the messenger, and presently found Madame Grandoni

occupying a liberal area on the steps of the tribune, behind the great altar, where, spreading a shawl on the polished red marble, she had comfortably seated herself. He suspected that she had something especial to impart, and she lost no time in bringing forth her treasure.

"Don't shout very loud," she said, "remember that we are in church; there's a limit to the noise one may make even in Saint Peter's. Christina Light was married this morning to Prince Casamassima."

Rowland did not shout at all; he gave a deep, short murmur. "Married—this morning?"

"Married this morning, at seven o'clock, *le plus tranquillement du monde*, before three or four persons. The young couple left Rome an hour afterwards."

For some moments this seemed to him really terrible; the dark little drama of which he had caught a glimpse had played itself out. He had believed that Christina would resist; that she had succumbed was a proof that the pressure had been cruel. Rowland's imagination followed her forth with an irresistible tremor into the world towards which she was rolling away with her unappreciated husband and her stifled ideal; but it must be confessed that if the first impulse of his compassion was for Christina, the second was for Prince Casamassima. Madame Grandoni acknowledged an extreme curiosity as to the secret springs of these strange doings—Casamassima's sudden dismissal, his still more sudden recall, the hurried private marriage. "Listen," said Rowland, presently, "and I will tell you something." And he related in detail his last visit to Mrs. Light, and his talk with this lady, with Christina, and with the Cavaliere.

"Good," she said; "it's all very curious. But it's a riddle, and I only half guess it."

"Well," said Rowland, "I desire to harm no one; but certain suppositions have taken shape in my mind which serve as the answers to two or three riddles."

"It is very true," Madame Grandoni replied, "that

the Cavaliere, as he stands, has always needed to be explained."

"He is explained by the hypothesis that three-and-twenty years ago, at Ancona, Mrs. Light had a lover."

"I see. Ancona was dull, Mrs. Light was lively, and —three-and-twenty years ago, perhaps—the Cavaliere was fascinating. Doubtless it would be fairer to say that he was fascinated. Poor Giacosa!"

"He has had his compensation," Rowland said. "He has been passionately fond of Christina."

"Naturally. But has Christina never wondered why?"

"If she had been near guessing, her mother's shabby treatment of him would have put her off the scent. Mrs. Light's conscience has apparently told her that she could expiate an hour's too great kindness by twenty years' contempt. So she kept her secret. But what is the profit of having a secret unless you can make some use of it? The day at last came when she could turn hers to account; she could let the skeleton out of the closet and create a panic."

"I don't understand."

"Neither do I, morally," said Rowland. "I only conceive that there was a horrible fabulous scene. The poor Cavaliere stood outside, at the door, white as a corpse and as dumb. The mother and daughter had it out together. Mrs. Light burned her ships. When she came out she had three lines of writing in her daughter's hand, which the Cavaliere was despatched with to the Prince. They overtook the young man in time, and when he reappeared he was delighted to dispense with farther waiting. I don't know what he thought of the look in his bride's face; but that is how I roughly reconstruct history."

"Christina was forced to decide, then, that she could not afford not to be a princess?"

"She had to knock under to a revelation—to humiliation. She was assured that it was not for her to make

conditions, but to thank her stars that there were none made for her. If she persisted, she might find it coming to pass that there would be conditions, and the formal rupture —the rupture that the world would hear of and pry into— would then proceed from the Prince and not from her."

"That's all nonsense!" said Madame Grandoni. "What would the world care?"

"It is nonsense to us, yes; but not to the proudest girl in the world, deeply wounded in her pride and not stopping to calculate probabilities, but muffling her shame with an almost sensuous relief in a splendour that stood within her grasp and would cover everything. Is it not possible that the late Mr. Light had made an outbreak before witnesses who are still living?—that the child's coming into the world was in itself a scandal? Say Light had quarrelled with his wife and was virtually separated from her."

"Certainly her marriage now," said Madame Grandoni, less analytically, "has the advantage that it takes her away from her dear parents!"

This lady's farther comments upon the event are not immediately pertinent to our history; there were some other comments of which Rowland had a deeply oppressive foreboding. He called on the evening of the morrow upon Mrs. Hudson, and found Roderick with the two ladies. Their companion had apparently but lately entered, and Rowland afterwards learned that it was his first appearance since the writing of the note which had so distressed his mother. He had flung himself upon a sofa, where he sat with his chin upon his breast, staring before him with a sinister spark in his eye. He fixed his gaze on Rowland, but gave him no greeting. He had evidently been saying something to startle his companions; Mrs. Hudson had gone and seated herself, timidly and imploringly, on the edge of the sofa, trying to take his hand. Mary was applying herself to a piece of needlework with conscious intentness.

Mrs. Hudson gave Rowland on his entrance a touching look of gratitude. "Oh, we have such blessed news!" she said. "Roderick is ready to leave Rome."

"It's not blessed news; it's cursed news!" cried Roderick.

"Oh, but we are very glad, my son, and I am sure you will be when you get away. You are looking most dreadfully thin; isn't he, Mr. Mallet? It's plain enough you need a change. I am sure we will go wherever you like. Where should you like to go?"

Roderick turned his head slowly and looked at her. He had let her take his hand, which she pressed tenderly between her own. He gazed at her for some time in silence. "Poor mother!" he said at last, very inconclusively.

"My own dear son!" murmured Mrs. Hudson, in all the innocence of her trust.

"I don't care a straw where you go! I don't care a straw for anything!"

"Oh, my dear boy, you must not say that before all of us here—before Mary, before Mr. Mallet!"

"Mary—Mr. Mallet?" Roderick repeated, almost savagely. He released himself from the clasp of his mother's hand and turned away, leaning his elbows on his knees and holding his head in his hands. There was a silence; Rowland said nothing, because he was watching the girl. "Why should I stand on ceremony with Mary and Mr. Mallet?" Roderick presently added. "Mary pretends to believe I am a fine fellow, and if she believes it as she ought, nothing I can say will alter her opinion. Mallet knows I am a hopeless humbug; so I needn't mince my words with him."

"Ah, my dear, don't use such dreadful language!" said Mrs. Hudson. "Aren't we all devoted to you, and proud of you, and waiting only to hear what you want, so that we may do it?"

Roderick got up and began to walk about the room;

he was evidently perfectly reckless. Rowland observed with anxiety that Mrs. Hudson, who did not know on what delicate ground she was treading, was disposed to chide him endearingly, as a mere expression of tenderness. He foresaw that she would bring down the hovering thunderbolt on her head.

"In God's name," Roderick cried, "don't remind me of my obligations! It's intolerable to me, and I don't believe it's pleasant to Mallet. I know they are tremendous—I know I shall never repay them. I am bankrupt! Do you know what that means?"

The poor lady sat staring in dismay, and Rowland angrily interfered. "Don't talk such stuff to your mother!" he cried. "Don't you see you are frightening her?"

"Frightening her? she may as well be frightened first as last. Do I frighten you, mother?"

"Oh, Roderick, what *do* you mean?" whimpered the poor lady. "Mr. Mallet, what does he mean?"

"I mean that I am an angry, savage, disappointed, miserable man!" Roderick went on. "I mean that I can't do a stroke of work nor think a profitable thought! I mean that I am in a state of helpless rage and grief and shame! Helpless, helpless—that's what it is. You can't help me, poor mother—not with kisses nor tears nor prayers! Mary can't help me—not for all the honour she does me nor all the big books on art that she pores over. Mallet can't help me—not with all his money nor all his good example nor all his friendship, which I am so immensely well aware of: not with all it multiplied a thousand times and repeated to all eternity! I thought you would help me, you and Mary; that's why I sent for you. But you can't, don't think it! The sooner you give up the idea the better for you. Give up being proud of me too; there's nothing left of me to be proud of! A year ago I was a mighty fine fellow; but do you know what has become of me now? I have gone to the devil!"

There was something in the ring of Roderick's voice, as he uttered these words, which sent them home with convincing force.

He was not talking for effect, or the mere personal pleasure of extravagant and paradoxical utterance, as had often enough been the case ere this; he was not even talking viciously or ill-humouredly. He was talking passionately, desperately, sincerely, from an irresistible need to throw off the oppressive burden of his mother's confidence. His cruel eloquence brought the poor lady to her feet, and she stood there with clasped hands, petrified and voiceless. Mary Garland quickly left her place, came straight to Roderick and laid her hand on his arm, looking at him with all her tormented heart in her eyes. He made no movement to disengage himself; he simply shook his head several times in dogged negation of her healing powers. Rowland had been living for the past month in such intolerable expectancy of disaster that now that the ice was broken and the fatal plunge taken his foremost feeling was almost elation. But in a moment his conservative instincts corrected it.

"I really don't perceive," he said, "the profit of your talking in just this way at just this time. Don't you see how you are making your mother suffer?"

"Do I enjoy it myself?" cried Roderick. "Is the suffering all on your side and theirs? Do I look as if I were happy and were stirring you up with a stick for my amusement? Here we all are in the same boat; we might as well understand each other! These women must know that I am not to be counted on. That sounds remarkably cool, no doubt, and I certainly don't deny your right to be disgusted with me."

"Will you keep what you have got to say till another time," said Mary, "and let me hear it alone?"

"Oh, I will let you hear it as often as you please; but what's the use of keeping it? I am in the humour now; it won't keep! It's a very simple matter—it isn't

worth keeping. I am a failure, that's all; I am not a first-rate man. I am second-rate, tenth-rate, anything you please. After that it's all one!"

Mary turned away and buried her face in her hands; but Roderick, struck apparently in some unwonted fashion with her gesture, drew her towards him again and went on in a somewhat different tone. "It's hardly worth while we should have any private talk about this, Mary," he said. "The thing would be comfortable for neither of us. It's better, after all, that it be said once for all and dismissed. There are things I can't talk to you about. Can I, at least? You are such a curious creature!"

"I can imagine nothing you shouldn't talk to me about," said Mary.

"You are not afraid?" he demanded sharply, looking at her.

She turned away abruptly, with lowered eyes, hesitating a moment. "Anything you think I should hear, I will hear," she said. And then she returned to her place at the window and took up her work.

"I have had a great blow," said Roderick. "I was a great ass, but it doesn't make the blow any easier to bear."

"Mr. Mallet, tell me what Roderick means!" said Mrs. Hudson, who had found her voice, in a tone more peremptory than Rowland had ever heard her use.

"He ought to have told you before," said Roderick. "Really, Rowland, if you will allow me to say so, you ought! You could have given a much better account of all this than I myself; better especially in that it would have been more lenient to me. You ought to have let them down gently; it would have saved them a great deal of pain. But you always want to keep things so quiet! Allow me to say that it's very weak of you."

"Speaking too well of you is a fault that's easily mended!" said Rowland, with a laugh.

"Oh, what is it, sir; what is it?" groaned Mrs. Hudson, insistently.

"It's what Roderick says. He's a failure!"

Mary Garland, on hearing this declaration, gave Rowland a single glance and then rose, laid down her work, and walked rapidly out of the room. Mrs. Hudson tossed her head and timidly bristled. "This from *you*, Mr. Mallet!" she said, with an injured air which Rowland found harrowing.

But Roderick, most characteristically, did not in the least resent his friend's assertion; he sent him, on the contrary, one of those large, clear looks of his which seemed to express a stoical pleasure in Rowland's frankness, and which set his companion wondering again, as he had so often done before, at the extraordinary incongruities of his temperament. "My dear mother," Roderick said, "if you had had eyes that were not blinded by this sad maternal vanity, you would have seen all this for yourself; you would have seen that I am anything but prosperous."

"Is it anything about money?" cried Mrs. Hudson. "Oh, do write to Mr. Striker!"

"Money!" said Roderick. "I have not a cent of money; I am bankrupt!"

"Oh, Mr. Mallet, how could you let him?" asked Mrs. Hudson, terribly.

"Everything I have is at his service," said Rowland, feeling ill.

"Of course Mr. Mallet will help you, my son!" cried the poor lady, eagerly.

"Oh, leave Mr. Mallet alone!" said Roderick. "I have squeezed him dry; it's not my fault if he has anything left!"

"Roderick, what have you done with all your money?" his mother demanded.

"Thrown it away! It was no such great amount. I have done nothing this winter."

"You have done nothing?"

"I have done no work! Why in the world didn't you guess it and spare me all this? Couldn't you see I was idle, distracted, debauched?"

"Debauched, my dear son?" Mrs. Hudson repeated.

"That's over for the present! But couldn't you see—couldn't Mary see—that I was in a damnably bad way?"

"I have no doubt Miss Garland saw," said Rowland.

"Mary has said nothing!" cried Mrs. Hudson.

"Oh, she's a fine creature!" Rowland said.

"Have you done anything that will hurt poor Mary?" Mrs. Hudson asked.

"I have only been thinking night and day of another woman!"

Mrs. Hudson dropped helplessly into her seat again. "Oh, dear, dear, hadn't we better go home?"

"Not to get out of *her* way!" Roderick said. "She has started on a career of her own, and she doesn't care a straw for me. My head was filled with her; I could think of nothing else; I would have sacrificed everything to her—you, Mary, Mallet, my work, my fortune, my future, my honour! I was in a fine state, eh? I don't pretend to be giving you good news; but I am telling the simple, literal truth, so that you may know why I have gone to the dogs. She pretended to care greatly for all this, and to be willing to make any sacrifice in return; she had a magnificent chance, for she was being forced into a mercenary marriage with a man she detested. She led me to believe that she would send her Prince about his business and keep herself free and sacred and pure for me. This was a great honour, and you may believe that I valued it. It turned my head, and I lived only to see my happiness come to pass. She did everything to encourage me to hope it would; everything that her infernal coquetry and falsity could suggest."

"Oh, I say, this is too much!" Rowland broke out.

"Do you defend her?" Roderick cried, with a renewal

of his passion. "Do you pretend to say that she gave me no hopes?" He had been speaking with growing bitterness, quite losing sight of his mother's pain and bewilderment in the passionate joy of publishing his wrongs. Since he was hurt he must cry out; since he was in pain he must scatter his pain abroad. Of his never thinking of others save as they figured in his own game, this extraordinary insensibility to the injurious effects of his eloquence was a capital example; the more so as the motive of his eloquence was never an appeal for sympathy or compassion—things to which he seemed perfectly indifferent and of which he could make no use. The great and characteristic point with him was the perfect exclusiveness of his emotions. He never saw himself as part of a whole; only as the clear-cut, sharp-edged, isolated individual, rejoicing or raging, as the case might be, but needing in any case absolutely to affirm himself. All this to Rowland was ancient history, but his perception of it stirred within him afresh at the sight of Roderick's sense of having been betrayed. That *he*, under the circumstances, was hardly the person to raise the cry of treason, was a point to which at his leisure Rowland was of course capable of rendering impartial justice; but Roderick's present desperation was so peremptory that it imposed itself on one's sympathies. "Do you pretend to say," he went on, "that she didn't lead me along to the very edge of fulfilment, and stupefy me with all that she suffered me to believe, all that she solemnly promised? It amused her to do it, and she knew perfectly well what she really meant. She never meant to be sincere; she never dreamed she could be. She's a ravenous flirt, and why a flirt is a flirt is more than I can tell you. I can't understand playing with those matters; for me they are serious, whether I take them up or lay them down. I don't see what's in your head, Rowland, to attempt to defend that woman; you were the first to cry out against her! You told me she was dangerous, and I pooh-

poohed you. You were right; you are always right. She is as cold and false and heartless as she is beautiful, and she has sold her heartless beauty to the highest bidder. I hope he knows what he gets!"

"Oh, my son," cried Mrs. Hudson, plaintively, "how could you ever care for such a dreadful creature?"

"It would take long to tell you, dear mother!"

Rowland's lately-deepened sympathy and compassion for Christina was still throbbing in his mind, and he felt that, in loyalty to it, he must say a word for her. "You believed in her too much at first," he declared, "and you believe in her too little now."

Roderick looked at him with eyes almost lurid. "She's an angel, then, after all?—that is what you want to prove!" he cried. "That's consoling for me who have lost her! You are always right, I say; but my dear fellow, in mercy be wrong for once!"

"Oh yes, Mr. Mallet, be merciful!" said Mrs. Hudson in a tone which, for all its gentleness, made Rowland stare. The poor fellow's stare covered a great deal of concentrated wonder and apprehension—a presentiment of what a small, sweet, feeble, elderly lady might be capable of in the way of suddenly generated animosity. There was no space in Mrs. Hudson's tiny maternal mind for complications of feeling, and one emotion existed only by turning another over flat and perching on top of it. She was evidently not following Roderick at all in his dusky aberrations. Sitting without, in dismay, she only saw that all was darkness and trouble, and as Roderick's glory had now quite outstripped her powers of imagination and lifted him beyond her jurisdiction, so that he had become a thing too precious and sacred for blame, she found it infinitely comfortable to lay the burden of their common affliction upon Rowland's broad shoulders. Had he not promised to make them all rich and happy? And this was the end of it! Rowland felt as if his trials were only beginning. "Hadn't you better

forget all this, my dear?" Mrs. Hudson said to her son. "Hadn't you better just quietly attend to your work?"

"Work, madam?" cried Roderick. "My work's over. I can't work—I haven't worked all winter. If I were fit for anything, this tremendous slap in the face would have been just the thing to cure me of my apathy. But there's a perfect vacuum here!" And he tapped his forehead. "It's bigger than ever; it grows bigger every hour!"

"I am sure you have made a beautiful likeness of your poor little mother," said Mrs. Hudson, coaxingly.

"I had done nothing before, and I have done nothing since! I quarrelled with an excellent man the other day from mere exasperation of my nerves, and threw away five thousand dollars!"

"Threw away—five thousand dollars!" Roderick had been wandering among formidable abstractions and allusions too dark to penetrate. But here was a concrete fact, lucidly stated, and poor Mrs. Hudson for a moment looked it in the face. She repeated her son's words a third time with a gasping murmur, and then suddenly she burst into tears. Roderick went to her, sat down beside her, put his arm round her, fixed his eyes coldly on the floor, and waited for her to weep herself out. She leaned her head on his shoulder and sobbed broken-heartedly. She said not a word, she made no attempt to scold; but the desolation of her tears was overwhelming. It lasted some time—too long for Rowland's courage. He had stood silent, wishing simply to appear very respectful; but the elation that was mentioned a while since had utterly ebbed, and he found his situation intolerable. He was reduced to the vulgar expedient of leaving the room.

The next day, while he was at home, the servant brought him the card of a visitor. He read with surprise the name of Mrs. Hudson, and hurried forward to meet her. He found her in his sitting-room, leaning on the arm of her son and looking very pale, her eyes red with

weeping and her lips tightly compressed. Her advent puzzled him, and it was not for some time that he began to understand the motive of it. Roderick's countenance threw no light upon it; but Roderick's luminous visage had never had any power of projecting its radiance. He had not been in Rowland's rooms for several weeks, and he immediately began to look at those of his own works that adorned them. He gave himself up to independent contemplation. Mrs. Hudson had evidently armed herself with dignity, and so far as she might she meant to be impressive. Her success, however, may be measured by the fact that Rowland's whole attention centred in the fear of seeing her begin to weep. She told him that she had come to him for practical advice; she took leave to remind him that she was a stranger in the land. Where were they to go, please? What were they to do? Rowland glanced at Roderick, but Roderick had his back turned, and, with his head on one side, like a tourist in a church, was gazing at his splendid "Adam."

"Roderick says he doesn't know, he doesn't care," Mrs. Hudson said; "he leaves it entirely to you."

Many another man, in Rowland's place, would have greeted this information with an irate and sarcastic laugh, and told his visitors that he thanked them infinitely for their confidence, but that really as things stood now they must settle these little matters between themselves; many another man might have so comported himself, even if, like Rowland, he had been in love with Mary Garland and pressingly conscious that her destiny was also part of the question. But Rowland swallowed all hilarity and all sarcasm, and entered into Mrs. Hudson's dilemma. His wits, however, were but indifferently at his command; they were dulled by his sense of the singular change that had taken place in the attitude of this bewildered woman. Her visit was evidently intended as a formal reminder of forgotten vows. Mrs. Hudson was doubtless too sincerely humble a person to suppose that

if he had had the wicked levity to break faith with her, her imponderable presence would operate as a chastisement. But by some diminutive logical process of her own she had convinced herself that she had been weakly trustful, and that she had suffered Rowland to think too meanly not only of her understanding but of her social consequence. A visit in her best gown would have an admonitory effect as regards both of these attributes; it would cancel some favours received, and show him that she was not incapable of grasping the theory, at least, of retribution! These were the reflections of a very shy woman, who, determining for once in her life to hold up her head, was actually flying it like a kite.

"You know we have very little money to spend," she said, as Rowland remained silent. "Roderick tells me that he has debts, and nothing at all to pay them with. He says I must write to Mr. Striker to sell my house for what it will bring and send me out the money. When the money comes I must give it to him. I am sure I don't know; I never heard of anything so dreadful! My house is all I have. But that is all Roderick will say. We must be very economical."

Before this speech was finished Mrs. Hudson's voice had begun to quaver softly, and her face, which had no capacity for the expression of a privileged consciousness, to look as humbly appealing as before. Rowland turned to Roderick and spoke like a schoolmaster. "Come away from those statues and sit down here and listen to me!"

Roderick started, but obeyed with the most graceful docility, choosing a stiff-backed antique chair.

"What do you propose to your mother to do?" Rowland asked.

"Propose?" said Roderick, absently. "Oh, I propose nothing."

The tone, the glance, the gesture with which this was said were horribly irritating, and for an instant an im-

precation rose to Rowland's lips. But he had checked it, and he was afterwards glad he had done so. "You must do something," he said. "Choose, select, decide!"

"My dear Rowland, how you talk!" Roderick cried. "The very point of the matter is that I can't do anything. I will do as I'm told, but I don't call that doing. We must leave Rome, I suppose, though I don't see why. We have got no money, and you have to pay money on the railroads."

Mrs. Hudson surreptitiously wrung her hands. "Listen to him, please!" she cried. "Not leave Rome, when we have stayed here later than any respectable family ever did before! It's this dreadful place that has made us so unhappy. Roderick's so fearfully relaxed!"

"It's very true that I'm relaxed!" said Roderick, serenely. "If I had not come to Rome I shouldn't have risen, and if I had not risen I shouldn't have fallen."

"Fallen—fallen!" murmured Mrs. Hudson. "Just hear him!"

"I will do anything you say, Rowland," Roderick added. "I will do anything you want. I have not been unkind to my mother—have I, mother? I was unkind yesterday, without meaning it; for, after all, you know, all that had to be said. Murder will out, and my little troubles can't be hidden. But we talked it over and made it up, didn't we? It seemed to me we did. Let Rowland decide it, mother; whatever he suggests will be the right thing." And Roderick, who had hardly removed his eyes from his statue, got up again and went back to look at it.

Mrs. Hudson fixed her eyes upon the floor in silence. There was not a trace in Roderick's face or in his voice of the bitterness of his emotion of the day before, and not a hint of his having the lightest weight upon his conscience. He looked at Rowland with his frank and radiant eye as if there had never been a difference of

opinion between them; as if each had ever been for both, unalterably, and both for each.

Rowland had received a few days before a letter from a lady of his acquaintance, a worthy Scotswoman domiciled in a villa upon one of the olive-covered hills near Florence. She held her apartments in the villa upon a long lease, and she enjoyed for a sum not worth mentioning the possession of an extraordinary number of noble, stone-floored rooms, with ceilings vaulted and frescoed, and barred windows commanding the loveliest view in the world. She was a needy and thrifty spinster, who never hesitated to declare that the lovely view was all very well, but that for her own part she lived in the villa for cheapness, and that if she had a clear three hundred pounds a year she would go and really enjoy life near her sister, a baronet's lady at Glasgow. She was now proposing to make a visit to that delectable city, and she desired to turn an honest penny by sub-letting for a few weeks her historic Italian chambers. The terms on which she occupied them enabled her to ask a rent almost jocosely small, and she begged Rowland to do what she called a little genteel advertising for her. Would he say a good word for her rooms to his numerous friends in Rome? He said a good word for them now to Mrs. Hudson, and told her in dollars and cents how cheap a summer's lodging she might secure. He dwelt upon the fact that she would strike a truce with *tables-d'hôte*, and have a cook of her own, amenable possibly to instruction in the Northampton mysteries. He had touched a tender chord; Mrs. Hudson became almost cheerful. Her sentiments upon the *table-d'hôte* system and upon foreign household habits generally were remarkable, and if we had space for it would repay analysis; and the idea of reclaiming a lost soul to culinary orthodoxy quite lightened the burden of her depression. While Rowland set forth his case Roderick slowly walked through the rooms with his hands in his

pockets. Rowland waited for him to manifest an interest in their discussion, but he had no attention for his friend's pictures. Rowland was a practical man; he possessed conspicuously what is called the sense of detail. He entered into Mrs. Hudson's position minutely, and told her exactly why it seemed good that she should remove immediately to the Florentine villa. She received his advice with great frigidity, looking hard at the floor and sighing, like a person well on her guard against an optimism which might be but an escape from penalties. But she had nothing better to propose, and Rowland received her permission to write to his friend that she would take the rooms.

Roderick assented to this decision without either sighs or smiles. "A Florentine villa is a good thing!" he said. "I am at your service."

"I am sure I hope you will recover your tone there," moaned his mother, gathering her shawl together.

Roderick laid one hand on her arm, and with the other pointed to Rowland's statues. "This is my tone just now. Once upon a time I did those things, and they are devilish good!"

Mrs. Hudson gazed at them vaguely, and Rowland said, "That's a capital tone!"

"They are atrociously good!" said Roderick.

Rowland solemnly shrugged his shoulders; it seemed to him that he had nothing more to say. But as the others were going, a last light pulsation of the sense of undischarged duty led him to address to Roderick a few words of parting advice. "You will find the Villa Pandolfini very delightful, very comfortable," he said. "You ought to be very contented there. Whether you work or whether you do what you are doing now, it's a place for an artist to be happy in. I hope you will work."

"I hope I may!" said Roderick, with a magnificent smile.

"When we meet again try and have something to show me."

"When we meet again? Where the deuce are *you* going?" Roderick demanded.

"Oh, I hardly know; over the Alps."

"Over the Alps! You are going to leave me?"

Rowland had certainly meant to leave him, but his resolution was not proof against this single ejaculation. He glanced at Mrs. Hudson, and saw that her eyebrows were lifted and her lips parted in delicate reprehension. She seemed to accuse him of a craven shirking of trouble, to demand of him to repair his cruel havoc in her life by a solemn renewal of zeal. But Roderick's expectations were the oddest! Such as they were, Rowland asked himself why he shouldn't make a bargain with them. "You want me to go with you?" he asked.

"If you don't go, I won't—that's all! How in the world shall I get through the next six months without you?"

"How will you get through them with me? That's the question!"

"I don't pretend to say; the future is a dead blank. But without you it's not a blank—it's certain damnation!"

"Mercy, mercy!" murmured Mrs. Hudson.

Rowland made an effort to turn this precious symptom of a positive desire to account. "If I go with you, will you try to work?"

Roderick up to this moment had been looking as unperturbed as if the deep agitation of the day before were a thing of the remote past. But at these words his face changed formidably; he flushed and scowled, and all his passion returned. "Try to work!" he cried. "Try—try! work—work! In God's name don't talk that way, or you'll drive me mad! Do you suppose I am trying *not* to work? Do you suppose I stand rotting here for the fun of it? Don't you suppose I would try to work for myself before I tried for you?"

"Mr. Mallet," cried Mrs. Hudson, piteously, "will you leave me alone with *this?*"

Rowland turned to her and informed her gently that he would go with her to Florence. After he had taken this engagement he thought not at all of the pain of his position as mediator between the mother's resentful grief and the son's incurable weakness; he drank deep, only, of the satisfaction of not separating from Mary Garland. If the future was a blank to Roderick, it was hardly less so to himself. He had at moments a sharp foreboding of impending calamity. He paid it no especial deference, but it made him feel indisposed to take the future into his account. On his going to take leave of Madame Grandoni, this lady asked when he would come back to Rome, and he answered that he would return either never or for ever. When she asked him what he meant, he said he really couldn't tell her, and he parted from her with much genuine emotion; the more so doubtless that she blessed him in a quite loving maternal fashion, and told him she honestly believed him to be the best fellow in the world.

XXII.

THE Villa Pandolfini stood directly upon a small grass-grown piazza, on the top of a hill which sloped straight from one of the gates of Florence. It offered to the outer world a long rather low façade, coloured a dull, dark yellow, and pierced with windows of various sizes, no one of which save those on the ground floor was on the same level with any other. Within, it had a great cool gray cortile, with high light arches around it, heavily-corniced doors of majestic altitude opening out of it, and a beautiful mediæval well on one side of it. Mrs. Hudson's rooms opened into a small garden supported on immense

substructions which were planted on the further side of the hill as it sloped steeply away. This garden was a charming place. Its southern wall was curtained with a screen of orange blossoms, a dozen fig-trees here and there offered you their large-leaved shade, and over the low parapet the soft grave Tuscan landscape kept you company. The rooms themselves were as high as chapels and as cool as royal sepulchres. Silence, peace, and security seemed to abide in the ancient house and make it an ideal refuge for unsuccessful lives. Mrs. Hudson had a stunted brown-faced Maddalena, who wore a crimson handkerchief passed over her coarse black locks and tied under her sharp pertinacious chin, and a smile which was as brilliant as a prolonged flash of lightning. She smiled at everything in life, especially the things that displeased her, and that kept her talent for mendacity in healthy exercise. A glance, a word, a motion, was sufficient to make her show her teeth at you like a cheerful she-wolf. This inexpugnable smile constituted her whole vocabulary in her dealings with her melancholy mistress, to whom she had been bequeathed by the late occupant of the apartment, and who, to Rowland's satisfaction, promised to be diverted from her maternal sorrows by the still deeper perplexities of Maddalena's theory of roasting, sweeping, and bed-making.

Rowland took rooms at a villa a trifle nearer Florence, whence in the summer mornings he had five minutes' walk in the sharp black shadow-strip projected by winding flower-topped walls to join his friends. The life at the Villa Pandolfini, when it had fairly defined itself, was tranquil and monotonous, but it might have borrowed from exquisite circumstance an absorbing charm. If a sensible shadow rested upon it, this was because it had an inherent vice; it feigned a light-heartedness which it very scantily felt. Roderick had lost no time in giving the full measure of his uncompromising chagrin, and as he was the central figure of the little group, as he held

its heart-strings all in his own hand, it reflected faithfully the eclipse of his genius. No one had ventured upon the cheerful commonplace of saying that the change of air and of scene would restore his spirits; this would have had, under the circumstances, altogether too silly a sound. The change in question had done nothing of the sort, and his companions had at least the comfort of their perspicacity. An essential spring had dried up within him, and there was no visible spiritual law for making it flow again. He was rarely violent, he expressed little of the irritation and *ennui* that he must have constantly felt; it was as if he believed that a spiritual miracle for his redemption was just barely possible, and was therefore worth waiting for. The most that one could do, however, was to wait grimly and doggedly, suppressing an imprecation as from time to time one looked at one's watch. An attitude of positive urbanity towards life was not to be expected; it was doing one's duty to hold one's tongue and keep one's hands off one's own windpipe and other people's. Roderick had long silences, fits of profound lethargy, almost of stupefaction. He used to sit in the garden by the hour, with his head thrown back, his legs outstretched, his hands in his pockets, and his eyes fastened upon the blinding summer sky. He would gather a dozen books about him, tumble them out on the ground, take one into his lap, and leave it with the pages unturned. These moods would alternate with hours of extreme restlessness, during which he mysteriously absented himself. He bore the heat of the Italian summer like a salamander, and used to start off at high noon for long walks over the hills. He often went down into Florence, rambled through the close dim streets, and lounged away mornings in the churches and galleries. On many of these occasions Rowland bore him company, for they were the times when he was most like his former self. Before Michael Angelo's statues and the pictures of the early Tuscans he quite forgot his own infelicities,

and picked up the thread of his old æsthetic loquacity. He found in Florence some of his Roman friends, and went down in the evening to meet them. More than once he asked Mary Garland to go with him into the town, where he showed her the things he most cared for. He had some sculptor's clay brought up to the villa and deposited in a room suitable for his work; but when this had been done he turned the key in the door and the clay never was touched. His eye was heavy and his hand cold, and his mother put up a secret prayer that he might be induced to see a doctor. But on a certain occasion, when her prayer became articulate, he had a great outburst of anger, and begged her to know once for all that his health was better than it had ever been. On the whole, and most of the time, he was a sad spectacle; he looked so hopelessly idle. If he was not querulous and bitter it was because he had taken an extraordinary vow not to be; a vow heroic for him, a vow which those who knew him well had the tenderness to appreciate. Talking with him was like skating on thin ice, and his companions had a constant mental vision of spots designated "dangerous."

This was a difficult time for Rowland; he said to himself that he would endure it to the end, but that he must never try it again. Mrs. Hudson divided her time between looking askance at her son, with her hands tightly clasped about her pocket-handkerchief, as if she were wringing it dry of the last hour's tears, and turning her eyes much more directly upon Rowland, in the mutest, the feeblest, the most intolerable reproachfulness. She never phrased her accusations, but he felt that in the unillumined void of the poor lady's mind they loomed up like vaguely-outlined monsters. Her demeanour caused him the acutest suffering, and if at the outset of his experiment he had seen, how dimly soever, one of those plaintive eye-beams in the opposite scale, the brilliancy of Roderick's promises would have counted

for little. These punctual messengers made their way to the softest spot in his conscience and kept it chronically aching. If Mrs. Hudson had been voluble and vulgar he would have borne even a less valid persecution with greater fortitude. But somehow, neat and noiseless and dismally lady-like as she sat there, keeping her grievance green with her soft-dropping tears, her displeasure conveyed an overwhelming imputation of brutality. He felt like a reckless trustee who has speculated with the widow's mite, and is haunted with the reflection of ruin that he sees in her tearful eyes. He did everything conceivable to be polite to Mrs. Hudson and to treat her with distinguished deference. Perhaps his exasperated nerves made him overshoot the mark, and rendered his civilities too grimly perfunctory. She seemed capable of believing that he was trying to make a fool of her; she would have thought him cruelly recreant if he had suddenly turned his back, and yet she gave him no visible credit for his constancy. Women are said by some authorities to be cruel; I know not how true this is, but it may at least be pertinent to remark that Mrs. Hudson was intensely feminine. It often seemed to Rowland that he had too decidedly forfeited his freedom, and that there was something grotesque in a man of his age being put into a corner.

But Mary Garland had helped him before, and she helped him now—helped him not less than he had assured himself she would when he found himself drifting to Florence. Yet her help was rendered as unconsciously and indirectly as before; he had made no apologies, and she had offered to remit no penalties. After that distressing scene in Rome which had immediately preceded their departure, it was of course impossible that there should not be on the girl's part some frankness of allusion to Roderick's sad condition. She had been present, the reader will remember, during only half of his uncompromising confession of his errors, and Rowland had not

seen her confronted with any absolute proof of Roderick's passion for Christina Light. But he knew that she knew far too much for her happiness; Roderick had told him, shortly after their settlement at the Villa Pandolfini, that he had had a "tremendous talk" with his cousin. Rowland asked no questions about it; he preferred not to know what had passed between them. If their interview had been purely painful he wished to ignore it for Mary's sake; and if it had sown the seeds of reconciliation he wished to close his eyes to it for his own—for the sake of that unshaped idea, for ever dismissed and yet for ever present, which hovered in the background of his consciousness with a hanging head and yet an unshamed glance, and whose lightest motions were an effectual bribe to patience. Had there been a formal rupture? Rowland wondered, yet without asking; and he thought it very possible that if there had not been, it was because Roderick had so completely bidden farewell to forms. It hardly mattered, however, for if Mary of her own movement had withdrawn her hand, her heart had by no means recovered its liberty. It was very certain to Rowland's mind that if she had given him up she had by no means ceased to care for him passionately, and that to exhaust her charity for his weaknesses Roderick would have, as the phrase is, a long row to hoe. She spoke of Roderick as she might have done of a person suffering from a serious malady which demanded much tenderness; but if Rowland had found it possible to accuse her of dishonesty he would have said now that she believed appreciably less than she pretended in her victim's being an involuntary patient. There are women whose love is care-taking and patronising, and who attach themselves to those persons of the other sex in whom the manly grain is soft and submissive. It did not in the least please Rowland to believe that Mary Garland was one of these, for he held that such women were only males in petticoats, and he was con-

vinced that this young lady's nature was typically girlish. That she was a very different woman from Christina Light did not at all prove that she was a less considerable one, and if the Princess Casamassima had gone up into a high place to publish her disrelish of a man who lacked the virile will, it was very certain that Mary was not a person to put up at any point with what might be called the Princess's leavings. It was Christina's constant practice to remind you of the complexity of her character, of the subtlety of her mind, of her troublous faculty of seeing everything in a dozen different lights. Mary had never pretended not to be simple; but Rowland had a theory that she had really a more multitudinous sense of human things, a more delicate imagination, and a finer instinct of character. She did you the honours of her mind with a grace far less regal, but was not that faculty of quite as remarkable a construction? If in poor Christina's strangely commingled nature there was circle within circle and depth beneath depth, it was to be believed that the object of Rowland's preference, though she did not amuse herself with dropping stones into her soul and waiting to hear them fall, laid quite as many sources of spiritual life under contribution. She had believed Roderick was a fine fellow when she bade him farewell beneath the Northampton elms, and this belief, to her young, strenuous, concentrated imagination, had meant many things. If it was to grow cold, it would be because disenchantment had become total and won the battle at each successive point.

Even in her face and carriage she had something of the preoccupied and wearied look of a person who is watching at a sick-bed; Roderick's broken fortunes, his dead ambitions, were a cruel burden to the heart of a girl who had believed that he possessed "genius," and who supposed that genius was to one's spiritual economy what a large bank account was to one's domestic. And yet with Mary, Rowland never tasted, as with Mrs.

Hudson, of that acrid under-current—that impertinent implication that he had defrauded her of happiness. Was this justice in the girl, or was it mercy? The answer would have been difficult, for she had almost let Rowland feel before leaving Rome that she liked him well enough to forgive him an injury. It was partly, Rowland fancied, that there were occasional lapses, deep and sweet, in her sense of injury. When on arriving at Florence she saw the place Rowland had brought them to in their trouble, she had given him a look, and said a few words to him that had seemed not only a remission of guilt but a positive reward. This happened in the court of the villa—the large gray quadrangle, overstretched, from edge to edge of the red-tiled roof, by the deep Italian sky. Mary had felt on the spot the sovereign charm of the place; it was reflected in her intelligent eyes, and Rowland immediately accused himself of not having done the villa justice. Mary fell in love on the spot with Florence, and used to look down wistfully at the towered city from their terraced garden. Roderick having now no pretext for not being her cicerone, Rowland was no longer at liberty, as he had been in Rome, to propose frequent excursions to her. Roderick's own invitations, however, were not frequent, and Rowland more than once ventured to introduce her to a gallery or a church. These expeditions were not so blissful to his sense as the rambles they had taken together in Rome, for his companion only half surrendered herself to her enjoyment, and seemed to have but a divided attention at her command. Often, when she had begun with looking intently at a picture, her silence after an interval made him turn and glance at her. He usually found that if she was looking at the picture still she was not seeing it. Her eyes were fixed, but her thoughts were wandering, and an image more vivid than any that Raphael or Titian had drawn had superposed itself upon the canvas. She asked fewer questions than

before, and seemed to have lost heart for consulting guide-books and encyclopædias. From time to time, however, she uttered a deep full murmur of gratification. Florence in midsummer was perfectly void of travellers, and the dense little city gave forth its æsthetic aroma with a larger frankness, as the nightingale sings when the listeners have departed. The churches were deliciously cool, but the gray streets were stifling, and the great dovetailed polygons of pavement were hot to the lingering tread. Rowland, who suffered from a high temperature, would have found all this uncomfortable in solitude; but Florence had never charmed him so completely as during these midsummer strolls with his preoccupied companion. One evening they had arranged to go on the morrow to the Academy. Mary kept her appointment, but as soon as she appeared, Rowland saw that something painful had befallen her. She was doing her best to look at her ease, but her face bore the marks of tears. Rowland told her that he was afraid she was ill, and that if she preferred to give up the visit to Florence, he would submit with what grace he might. She hesitated a moment, and then said she preferred to adhere to their plan. "I am not well," she presently added, "but it's a moral malady, and in such cases I consider your company an assistance."

"But if I am to be your doctor," said Rowland, "you must tell me how your illness came about."

"I can tell you very little. It came about with Mrs. Hudson being unjust to me—for the first time in her life. And now I am already better!"

I mention this incident because it confirmed an impression of Rowland's, from which he had derived a certain consolation. He knew that Mrs. Hudson considered her son's ill-regulated passion for Christina Light a very regrettable affair, but he suspected that her manifest compassion had been all for Roderick, and not in the least for her companion. She was fond of the young

girl, but she had valued her primarily during the last two years as a kind of assistant priestess at Roderick's shrine. Roderick had paid her the compliment of asking her to become his wife, but that poor Mary had any rights in consequence, Mrs. Hudson was quite incapable of perceiving. Her sentiment on the subject was, of course, not rigidly formulated, but she was unprepared to regard her companion, in the least, as a victim. Roderick was very unhappy; that was enough, and Mary's duty was to join her patience and her prayers to those of a disinterested parent. Roderick might fall in love with whom he pleased; no doubt that women trained in the mysterious Roman arts were only too proud and too happy to make it easy for him; and it was very presuming in a plain second cousin to feel any personal resentment. Mrs. Hudson's philosophy was of too narrow a scope to suggest that a mother may forgive where a mistress cannot, and she thought it a charge upon her own mortgaged charity that Mary should not accommodate herself to the position of a handmaid without wages. She was ready to hold her breath, so that Roderick might sigh at his ease, and she was capable of seeing her young kinswoman gasp for air without a tremor of compassion. Mary now apparently had given some intimation of her belief that if constancy is the flower of devotion, reciprocity is the guarantee of constancy, and Mrs. Hudson had denounced this as a very arrogant doctrine. That Mary had found it hard to reason with Mrs. Hudson, that she suffered deeply from the elder lady's moral parsimony, and that, in short, he had companionship in misfortune—all this made Rowland find a certain luxury in his discomfort.

The party at Villa Pandolfini used to sit in the garden in the evenings, which Rowland almost always spent with them. Their entertainment was in the heavily perfumed air, in the dim, far starlight, in the crenelated tower of a neighbouring villa, which loomed vaguely above them

through the warm darkness, and in such conversation as depressing reflections permitted. Roderick, clad always in white, roamed about like a restless ghost, silent for the most part, but making from time to time a brief observation characterised by the most fantastic cynicism. Roderick's contributions to the conversation were indeed always so fantastic that, though half the time they wearied him unspeakably, Rowland made an effort to treat them humorously. With Rowland alone Roderick talked a great deal more—often about the things that had formerly interested him. He talked as well as ever, or even better; but his talk always ended in a torrent of groans and curses. When this current set in Rowland straightway turned his back and stopped his ears, and Roderick now witnessed these movements with perfect indifference. When the latter was absent from the star-lit circle in the garden, as often happened, Rowland knew nothing of his whereabouts; he supposed him to be in Florence, but he never learned what he did there. All this was not enlivening; yet with an even, muffled tread the days followed each other and brought the month of August to a close. One particular evening at this time was enchanting; there was a perfect moon, looking so extraordinarily large that it made everything its light fell upon seem small; the heat was tempered by a soft west wind, and the wind was laden with the odours of the early harvest. The hills, the vale of the Arno, the shrunken river, the domes of Florence, were not so much lighted as obscured by the dense moonshine. Rowland had found the two ladies alone at the villa, and he had sat with them for an hour. He felt hushed by the solemn splendour of the scene, but he risked the remark that whatever life might yet have in store for either of them this was a night that they would never forget.

"It's a night to remember when one is dying!" Mary Garland exclaimed.

"Oh, Mary, how can you!" murmured Mrs. Hudson,

to whom this savoured of profanity, and to whose shrinking sense, indeed, the accumulated loveliness of the hour seemed to have something shameless and defiant.

They were silent after this for some time, but at last Rowland addressed certain idle words to the young girl. She made no reply, and he turned to look at her. She was sitting motionless, with her head pressed to Mrs. Hudson's shoulder, and the latter lady was gazing at him through the silvered dusk with a look which gave a sort of spectral solemnity to the sad weak meaning of her eyes. She had the air for the moment of a little old malevolent fairy. Mary, Rowland perceived in an instant, was not absolutely motionless; a tremor passed through her figure. She was crying, or on the point of crying, and she could not trust herself to speak. Rowland left his place and wandered to another part of the garden, wondering at the motive of her sudden tears. Of women's weeping in general he had a sovereign dread, but this, somehow, gave him a certain pleasure. When he returned to his place Mary had raised her head and brushed away her grief. She came away from Mrs. Hudson, and they stood for a short time leaning against the parapet.

"It seems to you very strange, I suppose," said Rowland, "that there should be any trouble in such a world as this."

"I used to think," she answered, "that if any trouble came to me I should bear it like a stoic. But that was at home, where things don't speak to us of enjoyment as they do here. Here it is such a mixture; one doesn't know what to choose, what to believe. Beauty stands there—beauty such as this night and this place and all this sad strange summer, have been so full of—and it penetrates to one's soul and lodges there and keeps saying that man was not made to suffer but to enjoy. This place has undermined my stoicism, but—shall I tell you? I feel as if I were saying something sinful—I love it!"

"If it is sinful, I absolve you—in so far as I have power. We are made both to suffer and to enjoy, I suppose. As you say, it's a mixture! Just now and here, it seems a peculiarly strange one. But we must take things in turn."

His words had a singular aptness, for he had hardly uttered them when Roderick came out from the house, evidently in his darkest mood. He stood for a moment gazing hard at the view.

"It's a very beautiful night, my son," said his mother, going to him timidly and touching his arm.

He passed his hand through his hair and let it stay there, clasping his thick locks. "Beautiful?" he cried. "Of course it's beautiful! Everything is beautiful; everything is insolent, defiant, atrocious with beauty; Nothing is ugly but me—me and my poor dead brain!"

"Oh, my dearest son," pleaded poor Mrs. Hudson, "don't you feel any better?"

Roderick made no immediate answer; but at last he spoke in a different voice. "I came expressly to tell you that you needn't trouble yourselves any longer to wait for something to turn up. Nothing *will* turn up! It's all over! I said when I came here I would give it a chance. I have given it a chance. Haven't I, eh? Haven't I, Rowland? It's no use; the thing's a failure! Do with me now what you please. I recommend you to set me up there at the end of the garden and shoot me."

"I feel strongly inclined," said Rowland, gravely, "to go and get my revolver."

"Oh, mercy on us, what language!" cried Mrs. Hudson.

"Why not?" Roderick went on. "This would be a lovely night for it, and I should be a lucky fellow to be buried in this garden. But bury me alive if you prefer. Take me back to Northampton."

"Roderick, will you really come?" cried his mother.

"Oh yes, I'll go! I might as well be there as anywhere—reverting to idiocy and living upon alms. I can do nothing with all this; perhaps I should really like Northampton. If I am to vegetate for the rest of my days, I can do it there better than here."

"Oh, come home, come home," Mrs. Hudson said, "and we shall all be safe and quiet and happy. My dearest son, come home with your poor little mother!"

"Let us go, then—quickly!"

Mrs. Hudson flung herself upon his neck for gratitude. "We will go to-morrow!" she cried. "The Lord is very good to me!"

Mary Garland said nothing to this; but she looked at Rowland, and her eyes seemed to contain a kind of alarmed appeal. Rowland observed it with exultation, but even without it he would have broken into an eager protest.

"Are you serious, Roderick?" he demanded.

"Serious? of course not! How can a man with a crack in his brain be serious? how can a d——d fool reason? But I am not jesting, either; I can no more make jokes than utter oracles!"

"Are you willing to go home?"

"Willing? God forbid! I am simply amenable to force; if my mother chooses to take me I won't resist. I can't! I have come to that!"

"Let me resist, then," said Rowland. "Go home in this state? I can't stand by and see it."

It may have been true that Roderick had lost his sense of humour, but he scratched his head with a gesture that was almost comical in its effect. "You are a queer fellow! I should think I would disgust you horribly."

"Stay another year," Rowland simply said.

"Doing nothing?"

"You shall do something. I am responsible for your doing something."

"To whom are you responsible?"

Rowland, before replying, glanced at Mary Garland, and his glance made her speak quickly. "Not to me!"

"I am responsible to myself," Rowland declared.

"My poor dear fellow!" said Roderick.

"Oh, Mr. Mallet, aren't you satisfied?" cried Mrs. Hudson, in the tone in which Niobe may have addressed the avenging archers after she had seen her eldest-born fall. "It's out of all nature keeping him here. When our poor hearts are broken, surely our own dear native land is the place for us. Do leave us to ourselves, sir!"

This just failed of being a dismissal in form, and Rowland made a note of it. Roderick was silent for some moments; then suddenly he covered his face with his two hands. "Take me, at least, out of this terrible Italy," he cried, "where everything mocks and reproaches and torments and eludes me! Take me out of this land of impossible beauty, and put me in the midst of ugliness. Set me down where nature is coarse and flat, and men and manners are vulgar. There must be something awfully ugly in Germany. Pack me off there!"

Rowland answered that if he wished to leave Italy the thing might be arranged; he would think it over and submit a proposal on the morrow. He suggested to Mrs. Hudson in consequence that she should spend the autumn in Switzerland, where she would find a fine tonic climate, plenty of fresh milk, and several very inexpensive *pensions*. Switzerland, of course, was not ugly, but one could not have everything!

Mrs. Hudson neither thanked him nor assented; but she wept and packed her trunks. Rowland had a theory, after the scene which led to these preparations, that Mary was weary of waiting for Roderick to come to his senses, that the faith which had borne him company on the tortuous march he was leading it, had begun to believe it had gone far enough. This theory was not vitiated by something she said to him on the day before that on which Mrs. Hudson had arranged to leave Florence.

"Cousin Sarah, the other evening," she said, "asked you to leave us to ourselves. I think she hardly knew what she was saying, and I hope you have not taken offence."

"By no means; but I honestly believe that my leaving you would contribute greatly to Mrs. Hudson's comfort. I can be your hidden providence, you know; I can watch you at a distance and come upon the scene at critical moments."

The girl looked for a moment at the ground; and then, with sudden earnestness, "I want you to come with us!" she said.

It need hardly be added that after this Rowland went with them.

XXIII.

ROWLAND had a very friendly memory of a little mountain inn, accessible with moderate trouble from Lucerne, where he had once spent a blissful ten days. He had at that time been trudging, knapsack on back, over half Switzerland, and not being a particularly light weight on his legs it was no shame to him to confess that he was mortally tired. The inn of which I speak presented striking analogies with a cow-stable; but in spite of this circumstance it was crowded with hungry tourists. It stood in a high shallow valley, with flower-strewn Alpine meadows sloping down to it from the base of certain rugged rocks whose outlines were grotesque against the evening sky. Rowland had seen grander places in Switzerland that pleased him less, and whenever afterwards he wished to think of Alpine opportunities at their best he recalled this grassy concave among the higher ridges, and the August days he spent there, resting deliciously at his length in the lee of a sun-warmed

boulder, with the light cool air stirring about his temples, the wafted odours of the pines in his nostrils, the tinkle of the cattle-bells in his ears, the vast progression of the mountain shadows before his eyes, and a volume of Wordsworth in his pocket. His face, on the Swiss hill-sides, had been scorched to a brilliant hue, and his bed was a pallet in a loft, which he shared with a German botanist of colossal stature—every inch of him quaking at an open window. These had been drawbacks to felicity, but Rowland hardly cared whether or how he was lodged, for he spent the livelong day under the sky, on the crest of a slope that looked at the Jungfrau. He remembered all this on leaving Florence with his friends, and he reflected that, as the midseason was over, accommodations would be more ample and charges more modest. He communicated with his old friend the landlord, and while September was yet young his companions established themselves under his guidance in the grassy valley.

He had crossed the Saint Gothard Pass with them in the same vehicle. During the journey from Florence, and especially during this portion of it, the cloud that hung over the little party had been almost dissipated, and they had looked at each other, in the close intimacy of the train and the posting carriage, without either retributive or argumentative glances. It was impossible not to enjoy the magnificent scenery of the Apennines and the Italian Alps, and there was a tacit agreement among the travellers to abstain from sombre allusions. The effect of this delicate compact seemed excellent; it ensured them a week's intellectual sunshine. Roderick sat and gazed out of the window with a fascinated stare, and with a perfect docility of attitude. He concerned himself not a particle about the itinerary or about any of the wayside arrangements; he took no trouble and he gave none. He assented to everything that was proposed, talked very little, and led for a week a perfectly contemplative life. His mother rarely removed her eyes

from him; and if a while before this would greatly have irritated him, he now seemed perfectly unconscious of her observation, and profoundly indifferent to anything that might befall him. They spent a couple of days on the Lake of Como, at an hotel with white porticoes smothered in oleander and myrtle, and terrace steps leading down to little boats with striped awnings. They agreed it was the earthly paradise, and they passed the mornings strolling through the cedarn alleys of classic villas, and the evenings floating in the moonlight in a circle of outlined mountains, to the music of silver-trickling oars. One day, in the afternoon, the two young men took a long stroll together. They followed the winding footway that led towards Como, close to the lake side, past the gates of villas and the walls of vineyards, through little hamlets propped on a dozen arches, and bathing their feet and their pendent tatters in the gray-green ripple; past frescoed walls and crumbling campaniles and grassy village piazzas and the mouth of soft ravines that wound upward through belts of swinging vine and vaporous olive and splendid chestnut, to high ledges where white chapels gleamed amid the paler boskage, and bare cliff surfaces, with their blistered lips, drank in the liquid light. It all was consummately picturesque; it was the Italy that we know from the steel engravings in old keepsakes and annuals, from the vignettes on music sheets and the drop-curtains at theatres; an Italy that we can never confess ourselves —in spite of our own changes and of Italy's—that we have ceased to believe. Rowland and Roderick turned aside from the little paved footway that clambered and dipped and wound and doubled beside the lake, and stretched themselves idly beneath a fig-tree on a grassy promontory. Rowland had never known anything so divinely soothing as the dreamy softness of that early autumn afternoon. The iridescent mountains shut him in; the little waves beneath him fretted the white pebbles

at the laziest intervals; the festooned vines above him swayed just visibly in the all but motionless air.

Roderick lay observing it all with his arms thrown back and his hands under his head. "This suits me," he said; "I could be happy here and forget everything. Why not stay here for ever?" He kept his position for a long time, and seemed lost in his thoughts. Rowland spoke to him, but he made vague answers; at last he closed his eyes. It seemed to Rowland also a place to stay in for ever; a place for perfect oblivion of the disagreeable. Suddenly Roderick turned over on his face and buried it in his arms. There had been something passionate in his movement; but Rowland was nevertheless surprised when he at last jerked himself back into a sitting posture, to perceive the trace of tears in his eyes. Roderick turned to his friend, stretching his two hands out towards the lake and mountains, and shaking them with an eloquent gesture, as if his heart had been too full for utterance.

"Pity me, my friend; pity me!" he presently cried. "Look at this lovely world, and think what it must be to be dead to it!"

"Dead?" said Rowland.

"Dead, dead; dead and buried! Buried in an open grave, where you lie staring up at the sailing clouds, smelling the waving flowers, and hearing all nature live and grow above you! That's the way I feel!"

"I am glad to hear it," said Rowland. "Death of that sort is very near to resurrection."

"It's too horrible," Roderick went on; "it has all come over me here! If I were not ashamed I could shed a bushel of tears. For one hour of what I *have* been I would give up anything I may be!"

"Never mind what you have been; be something better!"

"I shall never be anything again; it's no use talking! But I don't know what secret spring has been touched

since I have lain here. Something in my heart seems suddenly to open and let in a flood of beauty and desire. I know what I have lost, and I think it horrible! Mind you, I know it, I feel it! Remember that hereafter. Don't say that he was stupefied and senseless; that his perception was dulled, and his aspiration dead. Say that he trembled in every nerve with a sense of the beauty and sweetness of life; that he rebelled, and protested, and struggled; that he was buried alive, with his eyes open, and his heart beating to madness; that he clung to every blade of grass and every wayside thorn as he passed; that it was the most pitiful spectacle you ever beheld; that it was a scandal, an outrage, a murder!"

"Good heavens, man, are you insane?" Rowland cried.

"I have never been saner. I don't want to be bad company, and in this beautiful spot, at this delightful hour, it seems an outrage to break the charm. But I am bidding farewell to Italy, to beauty, to honour, to life! I only want to assure you that I know what I lose. I know it in every pulse of my heart! Here, where these things are all loveliest, I take leave of them. Good-bye, charming world!"

During their passage of the Saint Gothard Roderick absented himself much of the time from the carriage, and rambled far in advance, along the zigzags of the road. He displayed an extraordinary activity; his light weight and slender figure made him an excellent pedestrian, and his friends frequently saw him skirting the edge of plunging chasms, loosening the stones on long steep slopes, or lifting himself against the sky from the top of rocky pinnacles. Mary Garland walked a great deal, but she remained near the carriage to be with Mrs. Hudson. Rowland remained near it to be with Mrs. Hudson's companion. He trudged by her side up that magnificent ascent from Italy, and found himself regretting that the Alps were so low, and that their trudging was not to

last a week. She was exhilarated; she liked to walk; in the way of mountains, until within the last few weeks, she had seen nothing greater than Mount Holyoke, and she found that the Alps amply justified their reputation. Rowland knew that she loved natural things, but he was struck afresh with the vivacity of her observation of them, and with her knowledge of plants and rocks. At that season the wild flowers had mostly departed, but a few of them lingered, and Mary never failed to espy them in their outlying corners. They interested her greatly; she was charmed when they were old friends, and charmed even more when they were new. She displayed a very light foot in going in quest of them, and had soon covered the front seat of the carriage with a tangle of strange vegetation. Rowland, of course, was alert in her service, and he gathered for her several botanical specimens, which at first seemed inaccessible. One of these indeed had at first appeared easier of capture than his attempt attested. and he had paused a moment at the base of the little peak on which it grew, measuring the risk of farther pursuit. Suddenly as he stood there he remembered Roderick's defiance of danger and of Christina Light, at the Coliseum, and he was seized with a strong desire to test the courage of his own companion. She had just scrambled up a grassy slope near him, and had seen that the flower was out of reach. As he prepared to approach it she called to him eagerly to stop; the thing was impossible! Poor Rowland, whose passion had been terribly underfed, enjoyed immensely the thought of having her care for three minutes what should become of him. He was the least brutal of men, but for a moment he was perfectly indifferent to her suffering.

"I can get the flower," he called to her. "Will you trust me?"

"I don't want it; I would rather not have it!" she cried.

"Will you trust me?" he repeated, looking at her.

She looked at him, and then at the flower; he wondered whether she would shriek and swoon as Christina had done. "I wish it were something better!" she said, simply; and then stood watching him while he began to clamber. Rowland was not a trained acrobat, and his enterprise was difficult; but he kept his wits about him, made the most of narrow footholds and coigns of vantage, and at last secured his prize. He managed to stick it into his button-hole, and then he contrived to descend. There was more than one chance for an ugly fall, but he evaded them all. It was doubtless not gracefully done, but it was done, and that was all he had proposed to himself. He was red in the face when he offered Mary the flower, and she was visibly pale. She had watched him without moving. All this had passed without the knowledge of Mrs. Hudson, who was dozing beneath the hood of the carriage. Mary's eyes did not perhaps display that ardent admiration which was formerly conferred by the queen of beauty at a tournament; but they expressed something in which Rowland found his reward. "Why did you do that?" she asked, gravely.

He hesitated. He felt that it was physically possible to say, "Because I love you!" but it was not morally possible. He lowered his pitch and answered simply, "Because I wanted to do something for you."

"Suppose you had fallen?"

"I believed I should not fall. And you believed it, I think."

"I believed nothing. I simply trusted you, as you asked me."

"*Quod erat demonstrandum!*" cried Rowland. "I think you know Latin."

When our four friends were established in what I have called their grassy valley, there was a good deal of scrambling over slopes both grassy and stony, a good deal of flower-plucking on narrow ledges, a great many long

walks, and, thanks to the tonic mountain air, not a little exhilaration. Mrs. Hudson was obliged to intermit her suspicions of the deleterious atmosphere of the Old World, and to acknowledge the superior purity of the breezes of Engelthal. She was certainly more placid than she had been in Italy; having always lived in the country, she had missed in Rome and Florence that social solitude, mitigated by bushes and rock, which is so dear to the true New England temperament. The little unpainted inn at Engelthal, with its plank partitions, its milk-pans standing in the sun, its "help," in the form of angular young women of the country-side, reminded her of places of summer sojourn in her native land; and the beautiful historic chambers of the Villa Pandolfini passed from her memory without a regret, and without having in the least modified her ideal of a satisfactory habitation. Roderick had changed his sky, but he had not changed his mind; his humour was still that of which he had given Rowland a glimpse in that sharp outbreak on the Lake of Como. He kept his despair to himself, and he went doggedly about the ordinary business of life; but it was easy to see that his spirit was mortally heavy, and that he lived and moved and talked simply from the force of habit. In that sad half-hour among the Italian olives there had been such a fierce sincerity in his tone that Rowland began to abdicate the critical attitude. He began to feel that it was perfectly idle to appeal to his comrade's will; there was no will left; its place was a mocking vacancy. This view of the case indeed was occasionally contravened by certain indications on Roderick's part of the surviving faculty of resistance to disagreeable obligation: one might still have said, if one had been disposed to be didactic at any hazard, that there was a method in his madness, that his moral energy had its sleeping and its waking hours, and that in an attractive cause it was capable of rising with the dawn. But, on the other hand, pleasure in this case was quite at one with effort; evidently the greatest

bliss in life for Roderick would have been an inspiration. And then it was impossible not to feel tenderly to a despair which had so ceased to be aggressive—not to forgive much apathy to a temper which had turned its rough side inward. Roderick said frankly that Switzerland made him less miserable than Italy, and the Alps seemed less to mock at his idle hands than the Apennines. He indulged in long rambles, generally alone, and was very fond of climbing into dizzy places where no sound could overtake him, and there, flinging himself on the never-trodden moss, of pulling his hat over his eyes and lounging away the hours in perfect immobility. Rowland sometimes walked with him; though Roderick never invited him he seemed properly grateful for his society. Rowland now made it a rule to treat him as a perfectly sane man, to assume that all things were well with him, and never to allude to the prosperity he had parted with or to the work he was not doing. He would have still said, had you questioned him, that Roderick's condition was only a lugubrious interlude. It might last yet for many a weary hour; but it was a long lane that had no turning. Rowland's interest in Mary's relations with her cousin was still a very lively one, and perplexed as he was on all sides he found nothing penetrable here. After their arrival at Engelthal, Roderick appeared to care for the young girl's society rather more than he had done hitherto, and of this revival of ardour Rowland could not fail to make a note. They sat together and strolled together, and she often read aloud to him. One day on their coming to lunch, after he had been lying half the morning at her feet, in the shadow of a rock, Rowland asked him what she had been reading.

"I don't know," Roderick said, "I don't heed the sense." Mary heard this, and Rowland looked at her. She looked at Roderick sharply, and with a little blush. "I listen to Mary," Roderick continued, "for the sake of her voice. It's stupefyingly

sweet!" At this Mary's blush deepened, and she looked away.

Rowland, in Florence, as we know, had suffered his imagination to wander in the direction of certain conjectures which the reader may deem unflattering to her constancy. He had asked himself whether her faith in Roderick had not languished, and that demand of hers which had brought about his own departure for Switzerland had seemed almost equivalent to a confession that she needed his help to be constant. Rowland was essentially a modest man, and he did not risk the supposition that Mary had contrasted him with Roderick to his own advantage; but he had a certain consciousness of duty resolutely done which allowed itself to fancy at moments that it might be not unnaturally rewarded by the bestowal of such stray grains of enthusiasm as had crumbled away from her estimate of his companion. If some day she had declared in a sudden burst of passion that she was completely disillusioned, and that she gave up her recreant lover, Rowland's expectation would have gone half-way to meet her. And certainly, if her passion had taken this course, no generous critic would utterly condemn her. She had been neglected, ignored, forsaken, treated with a contempt which no girl of a fine temper could endure. There were girls, indeed, whose fineness, like that of Burd Helen in the ballad, lay in clinging to the man of their love through thick and thin, and in bowing their head to all hard usage. This attitude had often an exquisite beauty of its own, but Rowland thought that he had solid reason to believe it never could be Mary Garland's. She was not a passive creature; she was not soft and meek, and grateful for chance bounties. With all her reserve of manner she was proud and eager; she asked much and she wanted what she asked; she believed in fine things, and she never could long persuade herself that fine things missed were as beautiful as fine things achieved. Once Rowland passed an angry day.

He had dreamed—it was the most unsubstantial of dreams—that she had given him the right to believe that she looked to him to transmute her discontent. And yet, here she was, throwing herself back into Roderick's arms at his lightest overture, and betraying his own half fearful, half shameful hopes! Rowland declared to himself that his position was detestable, and that all the philosophy he could bring to bear upon it would make it neither honourable nor comfortable. He would go away and make an end of it. He did not go away; he simply took a long walk, stayed away from the inn all day, and on his return found Mary sitting out in the moonlight with Roderick.

Rowland, communing with himself during the restless ramble in question, had determined that he would at last cease to observe, to heed, or to care for, what these two young persons might do or might not do together. Nevertheless some three days afterwards, the opportunity presenting itself, he deliberately broached the subject with Roderick. He knew this was inconsistent and faint-hearted; it was an indulgence to the fingers that itched to handle forbidden fruit. But he said to himself that it was really more logical to return to the question than to drop it, for they had formerly discussed these mysteries very sharply. Was it not perfectly reasonable that he should wish to know the sequel of the situation which Roderick had then delineated? Roderick had made him promises, and it was to be expected that he should wish to ascertain how the promises had been kept. Rowland could not say to himself that if the promises had been extorted for Mary's sake, his present attention to them was equally disinterested; and so he had to admit that he was indeed faint-hearted. He may perhaps be deemed too rigid a casuist, but I have repeated more than once that he was solidly burdened with a conscience.

"I imagine," he said to Roderick, "that you are not

sorry at present to have allowed yourself to be dissuaded from putting an end to your affair with your cousin."

Roderick eyed him with the vague and absent look which had lately become habitual to his face, and repeated —"Dissuaded?"

"Don't you remember that in Rome you wished to break off your engagement, and that I urged you to hold to it, though it seemed to hang by so slender a thread? I wished you to see what would come of it. If I am not mistaken you are now reconciled to it."

"Oh yes," said Roderick, "I remember what you said; you made it a kind of personal favour to yourself that I should remain faithful. I consented, but afterwards, when I thought of it, your attitude greatly amused me. Had it ever been seen before?—a man asking another man to gratify him by *not* suspending his attentions to a pretty girl!"

"It was as selfish as anything else," said Rowland. "One man puts his selfishness into one thing, and one into another. It would have been a great bore to me to see your cousin in low spirits."

"But you liked her—you admired her, eh? So you intimated."

"I admire her extremely."

"It was your originality, then—to do you justice you have a great deal of a certain sort—to wish her happiness secured in just that fashion. Many a man would have liked better himself to make the woman he admired happy, and would have welcomed her low spirits as an opening for sympathy. You were very incongruous about it."

"So be it!" said Rowland. "The question is, Are you not glad I was incongruous? Are you not finding that you do care for your cousin, after all?"

"I don't pretend to say. When she arrived in Rome I found I didn't care for her, and I honestly proposed that we should have no humbug about it. If you, on the

contrary, thought there was something to be gained by having a little humbug I was willing to try it! I don't see that the situation is really changed. Mary is all that she ever was—more than all. But I don't care for her! I don't care for anything, and I don't find myself inspired to make an exception in her favour. The only difference is that I don't care now whether I care for her or not. Of course marrying such a useless lout as I am is out of the question for any woman, and I should pay Mary a poor compliment to assume that she is in a hurry to celebrate our nuptials."

"Oh, you'll do—you're in love!" said Rowland, not very logically. It must be confessed at any cost that this assertion was made for the sole purpose of hearing Roderick deny it.

But it quite failed of its aim. Roderick gave a liberal shrug of his shoulders, and an irresponsible toss of his head. "Call it what you please! I am past caring for the names of things."

Rowland had not only been illogical, he had also been slightly disingenuous. He did not believe that his companion was in love; he had argued the false to learn the true. The truth was that Roderick was again in some degree under a charm, and that he found a healing virtue in the company of a woman of tact. He had said shortly before that her voice was sweet to his ear; and this was a happy sign. If her voice was sweet it was probably that her glance was not amiss, that her touch had a quiet magic, and that her whole personal presence had learned the art of not being irritating. So Rowland reasoned, and invested Mary Garland with the subtlest merits.

It was true that she herself helped him little to definite conclusions, and that he remained in puzzled doubt as to whether these happy touches were still a matter of the heart or had become simply a matter of the conscience. He watched for signs that she took a pleasure in Roderick's favour again; but it seemed to him that she was on

her guard against interpreting it too largely. It was now her turn—he fancied that he sometimes gathered from certain nameless indications of glance and tone and gesture —it was now her turn to be indifferent, to care for other things. Again and again Rowland asked himself what these things were that she might be supposed to care for, to the injury of ideal constancy; and again, having designated them, he divided them into two portions. One was that larger experience in general which had come to her with her arrival in Europe; the vague sense, borne in upon her imagination, that there were more things one might do with one's life than youth and ignorance and Northampton had dreamt of; the revision of old pledges in the light of new emotions. The other was the experience in especial of Rowland's—what? Here Rowland always paused, in perfect sincerity, to measure afresh his possible claim to the young girl's regard. What might he call it? It had been more than civility, and yet it had been less than devotion. It had spoken of a desire to serve, but it had said nothing of a hope of reward. Nevertheless Rowland's fancy hovered about the idea that it was recompensable, and his reflections ended in a reverie which perhaps did not define it, but at least on each occasion added a little to its volume. Since Mary had asked him as a sort of favour to herself to come with them to Switzerland, he thought it possible she might let him know whether he seemed to have done her a service. The days passed without her doing so, and at last Rowland walked away to an isolated eminence some five miles from the inn and murmured to the silent rocks that she was ungrateful. Listening nature appeared not to contradict him, so that on the morrow he asked the young girl with a touch of melancholy malice whether it struck her that his deflection from his other plan had been attended with brilliant results.

"Why, we are delighted that you are with us!" she answered.

He was anything but satisfied with this; it seemed to imply that she had forgotten that she had formally asked him to come. He reminded her of her request, and recalled the place and time. "That evening on the terrace, late, after Mrs. Hudson had gone to bed, and Roderick being absent."

She perfectly remembered, but the memory seemed to trouble her. "I am afraid your kindness has been a great charge upon you," she said. "You wanted very much to do something else."

"I wanted above all things to oblige you, and I made no sacrifice. But if I had made an immense one it would be more than made up to me by any assurance that I have helped Roderick into a better condition."

She was silent a moment, and then, "Why do you ask me?" she said. "You are able to judge quite as well as I."

Rowland blushed; he desired to justify himself in the most veracious manner. "The truth is," he said, "that I am afraid I care only in the second place for Roderick's holding up his head. What I care for in the first place is *your* happiness."

"I don't know why that should be," she answered. "I have certainly done nothing to make you so much my friend. If you were to tell me you intended to leave us to-morrow, I am afraid that I should not venture to ask you to stay. But whether you go or stay, let us not talk of Roderick."

"But that," said Rowland, "does not answer my question. *Is* he better?"

"No!" she said, and turned away.

He was careful not to tell her that he intended to leave them.

XXIV.

ONE day shortly after this as the two young men sat at the inn door watching the sunset, which on that evening was very rich and clear, Rowland made an attempt to sound his companion's present sentiment touching Christina Light. "I wonder where she is," he said, "and what sort of a life she is leading her Prince."

Roderick at first made no response. He was watching a figure on the summit of some distant rocks opposite to them. The figure was apparently descending into the valley, and in relief against the crimson screen of the western sky it looked gigantic. "Christina Light?" Roderick at last repeated, as if arousing himself from a reverie. "Where she is? It's extraordinary how little I care!"

"Have you completely got over it?"

To this Roderick made no direct reply; he sat brooding a while. "She's a humbug!" he presently exclaimed.

"Possibly!" said Rowland. "But I have known worse ones."

"She disappointed me!" Roderick continued, in the same tone.

"Had she really given you up?"

"Oh, don't remind me!" Roderick cried. "Why the devil should I think of it? It was only three months ago, but it seems like ten years." His friend said nothing more, and after a while he went on of his own accord. "I believed there was a future in it all! She pleased me—pleased me; and when an artist—such as I was—is pleased, you know!" And he paused again. "You never saw her as I did; you never heard her in her great moments. But there is no use talking about that! At first she wouldn't regard me seriously; she chaffed me and made light of me. But at last I forced

her to admit I was a great man. Think of that, sir! Christina Light called me a great man. A great man was what she was looking for, and we agreed to find our happiness for life in each other. To please me she promised not to marry till I should give her leave. I was not in a marrying way myself, but it was damnation to think of another man possessing her. To spare my sensibilities she promised to turn off her Prince, and the idea of her doing so made me as happy as to see a perfect statue shaping itself in the block. You have seen how she kept her promise! When I learned it, it was as if the statue had suddenly cracked and turned hideous. She died for me, like that!" And he snapped his fingers. "Was it wounded vanity, disappointed desire, betrayed confidence? I am sure I don't know; you will certainly have some good name for it."

"The poor girl did the best she could," said Rowland.

"If that was her best, so much the worse for her! I have hardly thought of her these two months, but I have not forgiven her."

"Well, you may believe that you are avenged. I can't think of her as happy."

"I don't pity her!" said Roderick. Then he relapsed into silence, and the two sat watching the colossal figure as it made its way downward along the jagged silhouette of the rocks. "Who is this mighty man," cried Roderick at last, "and what is he coming down upon us for? We are small people here, and we can't undertake to keep company with giants."

"Wait till we meet him on our own level," said Rowland, "and perhaps he will not overtop us."

"He's like me," Roderick rejoined; "for ten minutes he will have passed for a great man!" At this moment the figure sank beneath the horizon line, and became invisible in the uncertain light. Suddenly Roderick said, "I should like to see her once more—simply to look at her."

"I would not advise it," said Rowland.

"It was her beauty that did it!" Roderick went on. "It was all her beauty; in comparison, the rest was nothing. What befooled me was to think of it as my own property! And I had made it mine—no one else had studied it as I had, no one else understood it. What does that stick of a Casamassima know about it at this hour? I should like to see it just once more; it's the only thing in the world of which I can say so."

"I would not advise it," Rowland repeated.

"That's right, my dear fellow," said Roderick; "don't advise! That's no use now."

The dusk meanwhile had thickened, and they had not perceived a figure approaching them across the open space in front of the house. Suddenly it stepped into the circle of light projected from the door and windows, and they beheld little Sam Singleton stopping to stare at them. He was the giant whom they had seen descending along the rocks. When this was made apparent Roderick was seized with a fit of intense hilarity—it was the first time he had laughed in three months. Singleton, who carried a knapsack and walking-staff, received from Rowland the friendliest welcome. He was in the serenest possible humour, and if in the way of luggage his knapsack contained nothing but a comb and a second shirt, he produced from it a dozen admirable sketches. He had been trudging over half Switzerland, and making everywhere the most vivid pictorial notes. They were mostly in a box at Interlaken, and in gratitude for Rowland's appreciation he presently telegraphed for his box, which, according to the excellent Swiss method, was punctually delivered by post. The nights were cold; and our friends, with three or four other chance sojourners, sat in-doors over a fire of great logs. Even with Roderick sitting moodily in the outer shadow, they made a sympathetic little circle, and they turned over Singleton's drawings, while he perched in the chimney-corner,

blushing and explaining, with his feet on the rounds of the chair. He had been pedestrianising for six weeks, and he was glad to rest a while at Engelthal. It was an economic repose, however, for he sallied forth every morning with his sketching tools on his back, in search of material for new studies. Roderick's hilarity, after the first evening, had subsided, and he watched the little painter's serene activity with a gravity that was almost portentous. Singleton, who was not in the secret of his personal misfortunes, still treated him with timid frankness as the rising star of American art. Roderick had said to Rowland at first that Singleton reminded him of some curious little insect with a remarkable mechanical instinct in its *antennæ;* but as the days went by it was apparent that the modest landscapist's unflagging industry grew to have an oppressive meaning for him. It pointed a moral, and Roderick used to sit and con the moral as he saw it figured in Singleton's bent back, on the hot hillsides, protruding from beneath his white umbrella. One day he wandered up a long slope and overtook him as he sat at work; Singleton related the incident afterwards to Rowland, who, after giving him in Rome a hint of Roderick's aberrations, had strictly kept his own counsel.

"Are you *always* like this?" said Roderick, in almost sepulchral accents.

"Like this?" repeated Singleton, blinking confusedly, with an alarmed conscience.

"You remind me of a watch that never runs down. If one listens hard one hears you always—tic-tic, tic-tic."

"Oh, I see," said Singleton, beaming ingenuously. "I am very equable."

"You are very equable, yes. And do you find it pleasant to be equable?"

Singleton turned and smiled more brightly, while he sucked the water from his camel's-hair brush. Then, with a quickened sense of his indebtedness to a Providence

that had endowed him with intrinsic facilities, "Oh, delightful!" he exclaimed.

Roderick stood looking at him a moment. "Damnation!" he said at last, solemnly, and turned his back.

Later in the week Rowland and Roderick took a long walk. They had walked before in a dozen different directions, but they had not yet crossed a charming little wooded pass which shut in their valley on one side and descended into the vale of Engelberg. In coming from Lucerne they had approached their inn by this path, and feeling that they knew it had hitherto neglected it in favour of untrodden ways. But at last the list of these was exhausted, and Rowland proposed the walk to Engelberg as a novelty. The place is half bleak and half pastoral; a huge white monastery rises abruptly from the green floor of the valley and complicates its picturesqueness with an element rare in Swiss scenery. Hard by is a group of chalets and inns, with the usual appurtenances of a prosperous Swiss resort—lean brown guides in baggy homespun, lounging under carved wooden galleries, stacks of alpenstocks in every doorway, sun-scorched Englishmen without shirt-collars. Our two friends sat a while at the door of an inn, discussing a pint of wine, and then Roderick, who was indefatigable, announced his intention of climbing to a certain rocky pinnacle which overhung the valley, and, according to the testimony of one of the guides, commanded a view of the Lake of Lucerne. To go and come back was only a matter of an hour, but Rowland, with the prospect of his homeward trudge before him, confessed to a preference for lounging on his bench or, at most, strolling a trifle farther and taking a look at the monastery. Roderick went off alone, and his companion after a while bent his steps to the monasterial church. It was remarkable, like most of the churches of Catholic Switzerland, for a hideous style of devotional ornament; but it had a certain cold and musty picturesqueness, and Rowland lingered

there with some tenderness for Alpine piety. While he was near the high altar some people came in at the west door, but he did not notice them, and was presently engaged in deciphering a curious old German epitaph on one of the mural tablets. At last he turned away, wondering whether its syntax or its theology were the more uncomfortable, and, to his infinite surprise, found himself confronted with Prince and Princess Casamassima.

The surprise on Christina's part, for an instant, was equal, and at first she seemed disposed to turn away without letting it give place to a greeting. The Prince, however, saluted gravely, and then Christina in silence put out her hand. Rowland immediately asked whether they were staying at Engelberg, but Christina only looked at him without speaking. The Prince answered his questions, and related that they had been making a month's tour in Switzerland, that at Lucerne his wife had been somewhat obstinately indisposed, and that the physician had recommended a week's trial of the tonic air and goat's milk of Engelberg. The scenery, said the Prince, was stupendous, but the life was terribly sad—and they had three days more! It was a blessing, he urbanely added, to see a good Roman face.

Christina's attitude, her solemn silence and her penetrating gaze, seemed to Rowland at first to savour of affectation; but he presently perceived that she was deeply agitated, and was afraid of betraying herself. "Do let us leave this hideous edifice," she said; "there are things here that set one's teeth on edge." They moved slowly to the door, and when they stood outside, in the sunny coolness of the valley, she turned to Rowland and said, "I am extremely glad to see you." Then she glanced about her and observed against the wall of the church an old stone seat. She looked at Prince Casamassima a moment, and he smiled more intensely, Rowland thought than the occasion demanded. "I

wish to sit here," she said, "and speak to this old acquaintance—alone."

"At your pleasure, dear friend," said the Prince.

The tone of each was measured, to Rowland's ear; but that of Christina was dry and that of her husband was splendidly urbane. Rowland remembered that the Cavaliere had told him that Mrs. Light's candidate was a prince indeed, and our friend wondered how he relished a peremptory accent. Casamassima was an Italian of the undemonstrative type, but Rowland nevertheless divined that, like other princes before him, he had made the acquaintance of the thing called compromise. "Shall I come back?" he asked, with the same smile.

"In half an hour," said Christina.

In the clear outer light Rowland's first impression of her was that she was more beautiful than ever. And yet in three months she could hardly have changed; the change was in Rowland's own vision of her, which that last interview on the eve of her marriage had made unprecedentedly tender.

"How came you here?" she asked. "Are you staying in this place?"

"I am staying at Engelthal, some ten miles away; I walked over."

"Are you alone?"

"I am with Roderick Hudson."

"Is he here with you?"

"He went half an hour ago to climb a rock for a view."

"And his mother and—and the *promessa*—where are they?"

"They also are at Engelthal."

"What do you do there?"

"What do *you* do here?" said Rowland, smiling.

"I count the minutes till my week is over. I hate mountains; they depress me to death. I am sure Miss Garland likes them."

"She is very fond of them, I believe."

"You believe—don't you know? But I have given up trying to imitate Miss Garland," said Christina.

"You surely need imitate no one."

"Don't say that," she said, gravely. "So you have walked ten miles this morning? And you are to walk back again?"

"Back again to dinner."

"And Mr. Hudson too?"

"Mr. Hudson especially. He is a great walker."

"You men are happy!" Christina cried. "I believe I should enjoy the mountains if I could do such things. It is sitting still and having them scowl down at you! Prince Casamassima never walks. He only goes on a mule. He was carried up the Faulhorn in a palanquin."

"In a palanquin?" said Rowland.

"In one of those machines—a *chaise à porteurs*—like a woman."

Rowland received this information in silence; it was equally unbecoming to be either amused or shocked.

"Is Mr. Hudson to join you again? Will he come here?" Christina asked.

"I shall soon begin to expect him."

"What shall you do when you leave Switzerland?" Christina continued. "Shall you go back to Rome?"

"I rather doubt it. My plans are very uncertain."

"They depend upon Mr. Hudson, eh?"

"In a great measure."

"I want you to tell me about him. Is he still in that perverse state of mind that afflicted you so much?"

Rowland looked at her mistrustfully, without answering. He was indisposed, instinctively, to tell her that Roderick was unhappy; it was possible she might offer to try to cure him. She immediately perceived his hesitation.

"I see no reason why we should not be frank," she said. "I should think we were excellently placed for

that sort of thing. You remember that formerly I cared very little what I said, don't you? Well, I care absolutely not at all now. I say what I please, I do what I please! How did Mr. Hudson receive the news of my marriage?"

"Very badly," said Rowland.

"With rage and reproaches?" And as Rowland hesitated again—"With silent contempt?"

"I can tell you but little. He spoke to me on the subject, but I stopped him. I told him it was none of his business nor of mine."

"That was an excellent answer!" said Christina, softly. "Yet it was a little your business, after those sublime protestations I treated you to. I was really very fine that morning, eh?"

"You do yourself injustice," said Rowland. "I should be at liberty now to believe you were insincere."

"What does it matter now whether I was insincere or not? I can't conceive of anything mattering less. I *was* very fine—isn't it true?"

"You know what I think of you," said Rowland. And for fear of being forced to betray his suspicion of the cause of her change he took refuge in a commonplace. "I hope your mother is well."

"My mother is in the enjoyment of superb health, and may be seen every evening at the Casino at the Baths of Lucca confiding to every newcomer that she has married her daughter to a pearl of a prince."

Rowland was anxious for news of Mrs. Light's companion, and the natural course was frankly to inquire about him. "And the Cavaliere Giacosa is well?" he asked.

Christina hesitated, but she betrayed no other embarrassment. "The Cavaliere Giacosa has retired to his native city of Ancona, upon a pension, for the rest of his natural life. He is a very good old man!"

"I have a great regard for him," said Rowland, gravely, at the same time that he privately wondered

whether the Cavaliere's pension was paid by Prince Casamassima for services rendered in connection with his marriage. "And what do you do," he continued, "on leaving this place?"

"We go to Italy—we go to Naples." She rose and stood silent for a moment, looking down the valley. The figure of Prince Casamassima appeared in the distance, balancing his white umbrella. As her eyes rested upon it Rowland imagined that he saw something deeper in the strange expression which had lurked in her face while he talked to her. At first he had been dazzled by her blooming beauty, to which the lapse of weeks had only added splendour; then he had seen a heavier ray in the light of her eye—a sinister intimation of sadness and bitterness. It was the outward mark of her sacrificed ideal. Her eyes grew cold as she looked at her husband, and when after a moment she turned them upon Rowland they struck him as intensely tragical. He felt a singular mixture of sympathy and dread; he wished to give her a proof of friendship, and yet it seemed to him that she had now turned her face in a direction where friendship was powerless to interpose. She half read his feelings apparently, and she gave a beautiful sad smile. "I hope we may never meet again!" she said. And as Rowland gave her a protesting look—"You have seen me at my best. I wish to tell you solemnly, I *was* sincere! I know appearances are against me," she went on quickly. "There is a great deal I can't tell you. Perhaps you have guessed it; I care very little. You know at any rate I did my best. It wouldn't serve; I was beaten and broken; they were stronger than I. Now it's another affair!"

"It seems to me you have a large chance for happiness yet," said Rowland, vaguely.

"Happiness? I mean to cultivate rapture; I mean to go in for bliss ineffable! You remember I told you that I was in part the world's and the devil's. Now

they have taken me all. It was their choice; may they never repent!"

"I shall hear of you," said Rowland.

"You will hear of me. And whatever you do hear, remember this: I *was* sincere!"

Prince Casamassima had approached, and Rowland looked at him with a good deal of simple compassion as a part of that "world" against which Christina had launched her mysterious menace. It was obvious that he was a good fellow, and that he could not in the nature of things be a positively bad husband; but his distinguished inoffensiveness only deepened the infelicity of Christina's situation by depriving her defiant attitude of the sanction of relative justice. So long as she had been free to choose she had esteemed him; but from the moment she was forced to marry him she had detested him. Rowland read in the young man's elastic Italian mask a profound consciousness of all this; and as he found there also a record of other curious things—of pride, of temper, of bigotry, of an immense heritage of more or less aggressive traditions—he reflected that the matrimonial conjunction of his two companions might be sufficiently prolific in incident.

"You are going to Naples?" Rowland said to the Prince by way of conversation.

"We are going to Paris," Christina interposed slowly and softly. "We are going to London. We are going to Vienna. We are going to St. Petersburg."

Prince Casamassima dropped his eyes, and fretted the earth with the point of his umbrella. While he engaged Rowland's attention Christina turned away. When Rowland glanced at her again he saw a change pass over her face; she was observing something that was concealed from his own eyes by the angle of the church wall. In a moment Roderick stepped into sight.

He stopped short, astonished; his face and figure were jaded, his garments dusty. He looked at Christina

from head to foot, and then, slowly, his cheek flushed and his eye expanded. Christina returned his gaze, and for some moments there was a singular silence. "You don't look well!" Christina said at last.

Roderick answered nothing; he only looked and looked, as if she had been a statue. "You are no less beautiful!" he presently cried.

She turned away with a smile, and stood a while gazing down the valley; Roderick stared at Prince Casamassima. Christina then put out her hand to Rowland. "Farewell," she said. "If you are near me in future don't try to see me!" And then after a pause, in a lower tone—"I *was* sincere!" She addressed herself again to Roderick, and asked him some commonplace about his walk. But he said nothing; he only looked at her. Rowland at first had expected an outbreak of reproach, but it was evident that the danger was every moment diminishing. He was forgetting everything but her beauty, and as she stood there and let him feast upon it Rowland was sure that she knew it. "I won't say farewell to you," she said; "we shall meet again!" And she moved gravely away. Prince Casamassima took leave courteously of Rowland; upon Roderick he bestowed a bow of exaggerated civility. Roderick appeared not to see it; he was watching Christina as she passed over the grass. His eyes followed her until she reached the door of her inn. Here she stopped and looked back at him.

XXV.

ON the homeward walk that evening Roderick preserved an ominous silence, and early on the morrow, saying nothing of his intentions, he started off alone; Rowland saw him striding with light elastic steps along the rugged

path to Engelberg. He was absent all day, and gave no account of himself on his return. He said he was deadly tired, and he went to bed early. When he had left the room Mary Garland drew near to Rowland.

"I wish to ask you a question," she said. "What happened to Roderick yesterday at Engelberg?"

"You have discovered that something happened?"

"I am sure of it. Was it something painful?"

"I don't know how at the present moment he judges it. He met the Princess Casamassima."

"Thank you!" said Mary, simply, and turned away.

The conversation had been brief, but like many small things it furnished Rowland with food for reflection. When one is looking for symptoms one easily finds them. This was the first time Mary Garland had asked Rowland a question which it was in Roderick's power to answer, the first time she had frankly betrayed Roderick's reticence. Rowland ventured to think it marked an era.

The next morning was sultry, and the air, usually so fresh at those altitudes, was oppressively heavy. Rowland lounged on the grass a while, near Singleton, who was at work under his white umbrella within view of the house; and then in quest of coolness he wandered away to the rocky ridge whence you looked across at the Jungfrau. To-day, however, the white summits were invisible; their heads were muffled in sullen clouds, and the valleys beneath them curtained in dun-coloured mist. Rowland had a book in his pocket, and he took it out and opened it. But his page remained unturned; his own thoughts were more absorbing. His interview with Christina Light had made a great impression upon him, and he was haunted with the memory of her almost blameless bitterness, and of all that was tragic and fatal in her latest transformation. These things were immensely appealing, and Rowland thought with infinite impatience of Roderick's having again become acquainted with them. It required little imagination to apprehend

that the young sculptor's condition had also appealed to Christina. His consummate indifference, his supreme defiance, would make him a magnificent trophy, and Christina had announced with sufficient distinctness that she had said good-bye to scruples. It was her fancy at present to treat the world as a garden of pleasure, and if hitherto she had played with Roderick's passion on its stem, there was little doubt that now she would pluck it with an unfaltering hand and drain it of its acrid sweetness. And why the deuce need Roderick have gone marching back to destruction? Rowland's meditations, even when they began in rancour, often brought him comfort; but on this occasion they ushered in a quite peculiar quality of unrest. He felt conscious of a sudden collapse in his moral energy; a current that had been flowing for two years with liquid strength seemed at last to pause and stagnate. Rowland looked away at the sallow vapours on the mountains; their dreariness had an analogy with the stale residuum of his own generosity. At last he had arrived at the uttermost limit of the deference a sane man might pay to other people's folly; nay, rather, he had transgressed it; he had been befooled on a gigantic scale. He turned to his book and tried to woo back patience, but it gave him cold comfort, and he tossed it angrily away. He pulled his hat over his eyes and tried to wonder dispassionately whether atmospheric conditions had not something to do with his ill-humour. He remained some time in this attitude, but was finally aroused from it by a singular sense that although he had heard nothing some one had approached him. He looked up and saw Roderick standing before him on the turf. His mood made the spectacle unwelcome, and for a moment he felt like speaking roughly. Roderick stood looking at him with an expression of countenance which had of late become rare. There was an unfamiliar spark in his eye, and a certain imperious alertness in his carriage. Confirmed habit, with Rowland, came speedily

to the front. "What is it now?" he asked himself, and invited Roderick to sit down. Roderick had evidently something particular to say, and if he remained silent for a time it was not because he was ashamed of it.

"I should like you to do me a favour," he said at last. "Lend me some money."

"How much do you wish?" Rowland asked.

"Say a thousand francs."

Rowland hesitated a moment. "I don't wish to be indiscreet, but may I ask you what you propose to do with a thousand francs?"

"To go to Interlaken."

"And why are you going to Interlaken?'

Roderick replied, without a shadow of wavering, "Because that woman is to be there."

Rowland burst out laughing, but Roderick remained serenely grave. "You have forgiven her, then?" said Rowland.

"Not a bit of it!"

"I don't understand."

"Neither do I. I only know that she is incomparably beautiful, and that she has waked me up amazingly. Besides, she asked me to come."

"She asked you?"

"Yesterday, in so many words."

"Ah, the shameless jade!"

"Exactly. I am willing to take her for that."

"Why, in the name of common sense, did you go back to her?"

"Why did I find her standing there like a goddess who had just stepped out of her cloud? Why did I look at her? Before I knew where I was the spell was wrought."

Rowland, who had been sitting erect, threw himself back on the grass and lay for some time staring up at the sky. At last, raising himself, "Are you perfectly serious?" he asked.

"Deadly serious."

"Your idea is to remain at Interlaken some time?"

"Indefinitely!" said Roderick; and it seemed to his companion that the tone in which he said this made it immensely well worth hearing.

"And your mother and cousin meanwhile are to remain here? It will soon be getting very cold, you know."

"It doesn't seem much like it to-day."

"Very true; but to-day is a day by itself."

"There is nothing to prevent their going back to Lucerne. I depend upon your taking charge of them."

At this moment Rowland reclined upon the grass again; and again after reflection he faced his friend. "How would you express," he asked, "the character of the profit that you expect to derive from your excursion?"

"I see no need of expressing it. The proof of the pudding is in the eating! The case is simply this. I desire immensely to be near Christina Light, and it is such a huge refreshment to find myself again desiring something, that I propose to drift with the current. As I say, she has waked me up, and it is possible that something may come of it. She makes me feel as if I were alive again. This sort of thing," and he glanced down at the inn, "I call death!"

"That I am very grateful to hear. You really feel as if you might do something?"

"Don't ask too much. I only know that she makes my heart beat, makes me see visions."

"You feel encouraged?"

"I feel excited."

"You are really looking better."

"I am glad to hear it. Now that I have answered your questions, please to give me the money."

Rowland shook his head. "For that purpose I can't!"

"You can't?"

"It's impossible. Your plan is pure folly. I can't help you in it."

Roderick flushed a little, and his eye expanded. "I will borrow what money I can, then, from Mary!" This was not viciously said; it had simply the ring of passionate resolution.

Instantly it brought Rowland to terms. He took a bunch of keys from his pocket and tossed it upon the grass. "The little brass one opens my dressing-case," he said. "You will find money in it."

Roderick let the keys lie; something seemed to have struck him; he looked askance at his friend. "You are awfully considerate of Mary!"

"You certainly are not. Your proposal is an outrage."

"Very likely. It's proof the more of my desire."

"If you have so much steam on, then, use it for something else! You say you are awake again. I am delighted; only be so in the best sense. Isn't it very plain? If you have the energy to desire, you have also the energy to reason and to judge. If you can care to go, you can also care to stay, and staying being the more profitable course, the inspiration, on that side, for a man who has his self-confidence to win back again, should be greater."

Roderick plainly did not relish this simple logic, and his eye grew angry as he listened to its echo. "Oh, the devil!" he cried.

But Rowland gave him more of it. "Do you believe that hanging about Christina Light will do you any good? Do you believe it won't? In either case you should keep away from her. If it won't, it's your duty; and if it will, you can get on without it."

"Do me good?" cried Roderick. "What do I want of 'good'—what should I do with 'good'? I want what she gives me, call it by what name you will. I want to ask no questions, but to take what comes and let it fill the impossible hours! But I didn't come to discuss the matter."

"I have not the least desire to discuss it," said Rowland. "I simply protest."

Roderick meditated a moment. "I have never yet thought twice about accepting any favour of you," he said at last; "but this one sticks in my throat."

"It is not a favour; I lend you the money only under compulsion."

"Well, then, I will take it only under compulsion!" Roderick exclaimed. And he sprang up abruptly and marched away.

His words were ambiguous; Rowland lay on the grass wondering what they meant. Half an hour had not elapsed before Roderick reappeared, heated with rapid walking and wiping his forehead. He flung himself down, and looked at his friend with an eye which expressed something purer than bravado and yet baser than conviction.

"I have done my best!" he said. "My mother is out of money; she is expecting next week some circular notes from London. She had only ten francs in her pocket. Mary Garland gave me every sou she possessed in the world. It makes exactly thirty-four francs. That's not enough."

"You asked Mary Garland?" cried Rowland.

"I asked her."

"And told her your purpose?"

"I named no names. But she knew!"

"What did she say?"

"Not a syllable. She simply emptied her purse."

Rowland turned over and buried his face in his arms. He felt a movement of irrepressible elation, and he barely stifled a cry of joy. Now, surely, Roderick had shattered the last link in the chain that bound Mary to him, and after this she would be free! . . . When he turned about again, Roderick was still sitting there, and he had not touched the keys which lay on the grass.

"I don't know what is the matter with me," said

Roderick, "but I have an insurmountable aversion to taking your money."

"The matter, I suppose, is that you have a grain of wisdom left."

"No, it's not that. It's a kind of brute instinct. I find it extremely provoking!" He sat there for some time with his head in his hands and his eyes on the ground. His lips were compressed, and he was evidently, in fact, in a state of high disgust. "You have succeeded in making this thing uncommonly unpleasant!" he exclaimed.

"I am sorry," said Rowland, "but I can't see it in any other way."

"That I believe, and I resent the range of your vision pretending to be the limit of my action. You can't feel for me or judge for me, and there are certain things you know nothing about. I have suffered, sir!" Roderick went on, with increasing emphasis and with the ring of his fine old Virginian pomposity in his tone. "I have suffered damnable torments. Have I been such a placid, contented, comfortable man this last six months that when I find a chance to forget my misery I should take such pains not to profit by it? You ask too much, for a man who himself has no occasion to play the hero. I don't say that invidiously; it's your disposition, and you can't help it. But decidedly there are certain things you know nothing about."

Rowland listened to this outbreak with open eyes, and Roderick, if he had been less intent upon his own eloquence, would probably have perceived that he turned pale. "These things—what are they?" Rowland asked.

"They are women, principally, and what relates to women. Women for you, by what I can make out, mean nothing. You have no imagination—no sensibility, nothing to be touched!"

"That's a serious charge," said Rowland, gravely.

"I don't make it without proof!"

"And what is your proof?"

Roderick hesitated a moment. "The way you treated Christina Light. I call that grossly obtuse."

"Obtuse?" Rowland repeated, frowning.

"Thick-skinned, beneath your good fortune."

"My good fortune?"

"There it is—it's all news to you! You had pleased her. I don't say she was dying of love for you, but she took a fancy to you."

"We will let this pass!" said Rowland, after a silence.

"Oh, I don't insist. I have only her own word for it."

"Her own word?"

"You noticed, at least, I suppose, that she was not afraid to speak! I never repeated it, not because I was jealous, but because I was curious to see how long your ignorance would last if it were left to itself."

"I frankly confess it would have lasted for ever. And yet I don't consider that my insensibility is proved."

"Oh, don't say that," cried Roderick, "or I shall begin to suspect—what I must do you the justice to say that I never have suspected—that you too have a grain of conceit! Upon my word, when I think of all this, your protest, as you call it, against my following Christina Light seems to me thoroughly offensive. There is something monstrous in a man's pretending to lay down the law to a sort of emotion with which he is quite unacquainted—in his asking a fellow to give up a lovely woman for conscience' sake when *he* has never had the impulse to strike a blow for one for passion's!"

"Oh, oh!" cried Rowland.

"It's very easy to exclaim," Roderick went on; "but you must remember that there are such things as nerves and senses and imagination and a restless demon within, that may sleep sometimes for a day, or for six months, but that sooner or later wakes up and thumps at your ribs till you listen to him! If you can't understand it,

take it on trust and let a poor visionary devil live his life as he can!"

Roderick's words seemed at first to Rowland like something heard in a dream; it was impossible they had been actually spoken—so supreme an expression were they of the insolence of egotism. Reality was never so consistent as that! But Roderick sat there balancing his beautiful head, and the echoes of his strident accent still lingered along the half-muffled mountain-side. Rowland suddenly felt that the cup of his chagrin was full to overflowing, and his long-gathered bitterness surged into the simple wholesome passion of anger for wasted kindness. But he spoke without violence, and Roderick was probably at first far from measuring the force that lay beneath his words.

"You are incredibly ungrateful," he said. "You are talking arrogant nonsense. What do you know about my senses and my imagination? How do you know whether I have loved or suffered? If I have held my tongue and not troubled you with my complaints, you find it the most natural thing in the world to put an ignoble construction on my silence! I loved quite as well as you; indeed I think I may say rather better. I have been constant. I have been willing to give more than I received. I have not forsaken one mistress because I thought another more beautiful, nor given up the other and believed all manner of evil about her because I had not my way with her. I have been a good friend to Christina Light, and it seems to me my friendship does her quite as much honour as your love!"

"Your love—your suffering—your silence—your friendship!" cried Roderick. "I declare I don't understand!"

"I daresay not. You are not used to understanding such things—you are not used to hearing me talk of my feelings. You are altogether too much taken up with your own. Be as much so as you please; I have always re-

spected your right. Only when I have kept myself in durance on purpose to leave you an open field, don't, by way of thanking me, come and call me an idiot."

"Oh, you claim, then, that you have made sacrifices?"

"Several! You have never suspected it?"

"If I had, do you suppose I would have allowed it?" cried Roderick.

"They were the sacrifices of friendship, and they were easily made; only I don't enjoy having them thrown back in my teeth."

This was under the circumstances a sufficiently generous speech; but Roderick was not in the humour to take it generously. "Come, be more definite," he said. "Let me know where it is the shoe has pinched."

Rowland frowned; if Roderick would not take generosity he should have full justice. "It's a perpetual sacrifice to live with a transcendent egotist!"

"I am an egotist?" cried Roderick.

"Did it never occur to you?"

"An egotist to whom you have made perpetual sacrifices?" He repeated the words in a singular tone; a tone that denoted neither exactly indignation nor incredulity, but (strange as it may seem) a sudden violent curiosity for news about himself.

"You are selfish," said Rowland; "you think only of yourself and believe only in yourself. You regard other people only as they play into your own hands. You have always been very frank about it, and the thing seemed so mixed up with the temper of your genius and the very structure of your mind that often one was willing to take the evil with the good and to be thankful that, considering your great talent, you were no worse. But if one believed in you as I have done one paid a tax on one's faith!"

Roderick leaned his elbows on his knees, clasped his hands together and crossed them shadewise over his eyes. In this attitude for a moment he sat looking coldly at

his friend. "So I have made you very uncomfortable?" he went on.

"Extremely so."

"I have been eager, grasping, obstinate, vain, ungrateful, indifferent, cruel?"

"I have accused you mentally of all these things—with the exception of vanity."

"You have often hated me?"

"Never. I should have parted company with you before coming to that."

"But you have wanted to part company, to bid me go on my way and be hanged?"

"Repeatedly. Then I have had patience and forgiven you."

"Forgiven me, eh? Suffering all the while?"

"Yes, you may call it suffering."

"Why did you never tell me all this before?"

"Because my affection was always stronger than my resentment; because I preferred to err on the side of kindness; because I had myself in a measure launched you in the world and thrown you among temptations; and because nothing short of your unwarrantable aggression just now could have made me say these painful things."

Roderick picked up a blade of long grass and began to bite it; Rowland was puzzled by his expression and manner. They seemed strangely cynical; there was something revolting in his deepening calmness. "I must have been hideous," Roderick presently resumed.

"I am not talking for your entertainment," said Rowland.

"Of course not. For my edification!" As Roderick said these words there was not a ray of warmth in his brilliant eye.

"I have spoken for my own relief," Rowland went on, "and so that you need never again go so utterly astray as you have done this morning."

"It has been a terrible mistake, then?" What his tone expressed was not wilful mockery, but a kind of persistent irresponsibility which Rowland found equally exasperating. He answered nothing. "And all this time," Roderick continued, "you have been in love? Tell me the woman."

Rowland felt an immense desire to give him a visible palpable pang. "Her name is Mary Garland," he said.

Apparently he succeeded. The surprise was great; Roderick coloured as he had never done. "Mary Garland? Heaven forgive us!"

Rowland observed the "us;" Roderick threw himself back on the turf. The latter lay for some time staring at the sky. At last he sprang to his feet, and Rowland rose also, rejoicing keenly, it must be confessed, in his companion's confusion.

"For how long has this been?" Roderick demanded.

"Since I first knew her."

"Two years! And you have never told her?"

"Never."

"You have told no one?"

"You are the first person."

"Why have you been silent?"

"Because of your engagement."

"But you have done your best to keep that up."

"That's another matter!"

"It's very strange!" said Roderick presently. "It's like something in a novel."

"We needn't expatiate on it," said Rowland. "All I wished to do was to rebut your charge that I am an abnormal being."

But still Roderick pondered. "All these months, while I was going my way! I wish you had mentioned it."

"I acted as was necessary, and that's the end of it."

"You have a very high opinion of her?"

"The highest."

"I remember now your occasionally expressing it and my being struck with it. But I never dreamed you were in love with her. It's a pity she doesn't care for you!"

Rowland had made his point, and he had no wish to prolong the conversation; but he had a desire to hear more of this, and he remained silent.

"You hope, I suppose, that some day she may?" Roderick asked.

"I shouldn't have offered to say so; but since you ask me, I do."

"I don't believe it. She idolises me, and if she never were to see me again she would idolise my memory."

This might be vivid insight and it might be profound fatuity. Rowland turned away; he could not trust himself to speak.

"My indifference, my neglect of her, must have seemed to you horrible. Altogether I must have appeared simply hideous."

"Do you really care," Rowland asked, "what you appeared?"

"Certainly. I have been damnably stupid. Isn't an artist supposed to be a man of perceptions? I am hugely disgusted."

"Well, you understand now, and we can start afresh."

"And yet," said Roderick, "though you have suffered, in a degree, I don't believe you have suffered so much as some other men would have done."

"Very likely not. In such matters quantitative analysis is difficult."

Roderick picked up his stick and stood looking at the ground. "Nevertheless, I must have seemed hideous," he repeated—"hideous." He turned away frowning, and Rowland offered no contradiction.

They were both silent for some time, and at last Roderick gave a heavy sigh and began to walk away, "Where are you going?" Rowland then asked.

"Oh, I don't care! To walk; you have given me something to think of." This seemed a salutary impulse, and yet Rowland felt a nameless perplexity. "To have been so stupid damns me more than anything!" Roderick went on. "Certainly I can shut up shop now."

Rowland felt in no smiling humour, and yet in spite of himself he could almost have smiled at the very consistency of the fellow. It was egotism still—æsthetic disgust at the graceless contour of his conduct, but never a hint of simple sorrow for the pain he had given. Rowland let him go, and for some moments stood watching him. Suddenly Rowland became conscious of a singular and most illogical impulse—a desire to stop him, to have another word with him—not to lose sight of him. He called him, and Roderick turned. "I should like to go with you," said Rowland.

"I am fit only to be alone. I am damned!"

"You had better not think of it at all," Rowland cried, "than think in that way."

"There is only one way. I have been hideous!" And he broke off and marched away with his long elastic step, swinging his stick. Rowland watched him, and at the end of a moment called to him. Roderick stopped and looked at him in silence, and then abruptly turned and disappeared below the crest of a hill.

XXVI.

ROWLAND passed the remainder of the day as best he could. He was half exasperated, half depressed; he had an insufferable feeling of having been placed in the wrong in spite of his excellent cause. Roderick did not come home to lunch; but of this, with his passion for brooding away the hours on far-off mountain-sides, he

had almost made a habit. Mrs. Hudson appeared at the noonday repast with a face which showed that Roderick's demand for money had unsealed the fountains of her distress. Little Singleton consumed an enormous and well-earned meal. Mary Garland, Rowland observed, had not contributed her scanty assistance to her kinsman's pursuit of the Princess Casamassima without an effort. The effort was visible in her pale face and her silence; she looked so ill that when they left the table Rowland felt almost bound to remark upon it. They had come out upon the grass in front of the inn.

"I have a headache," she said. And then suddenly, looking about at the menacing sky and motionless air, "It's this horrible day!"

Rowland that afternoon tried to write a letter to his cousin Cecilia, but his head and his heart were alike heavy, and he traced upon the paper but a single line. "I believe there is such a thing as being too reasonable. But when once the habit is formed, what is one to do?" He had occasion to use his keys, and he felt for them in his pockets; they were missing, and he remembered that he had left them lying on the hill-top where he had had his talk with Roderick. He went forth in search of them, and found them where he had thrown them. He flung himself down in the same place again; he felt indisposed to walk. He was conscious that his mood had greatly changed since the morning; his extraordinary acute sense of his rights had been replaced by the familiar chronic sense of his duties. Only, his duties now seemed impracticable; he turned over and buried his face in his arms. He lay so a long time, thinking of many things; the sum of them all was that Roderick had beaten him. At last he was startled by an extraordinary sound; it took him a moment to perceive that it was a portentous growl of thunder. He aroused himself and saw that the whole face of the sky had altered. The clouds that had hung motionless all day were moving from their

stations, and getting into position for a battle. The wind was rising, the turbid vapours were growing dark and thick. It was a striking spectacle, but Rowland judged best to observe it briefly, as a storm was evidently imminent. He took his way down to the inn, and found Singleton still at his post, profiting by the last of the rapidly-failing light to finish his study, and yet at the same time taking rapid notes of the actual condition of the clouds.

"We are going to have a most interesting storm!" the little painter gleefully cried. "I should like awfully to *do* it."

Rowland adjured him to pack up his tools and decamp, and repaired to the house. The air by this time had become tremendously dark, and the thunder was incessant and deafening; in the midst of it the lightning flashed and vanished, like the treble shrilling upon the bass. The innkeeper and his servants had crowded to the doorway and were looking at the scene with faces which seemed a proof that it was unprecedented. As Rowland approached, the group divided to let some one pass within, and Mrs. Hudson came forth, as white as a corpse and trembling in every limb.

"My boy, my boy, where is my boy?" she cried. "Mr. Mallet, why are you here without him? Bring him to me!"

"Has no one seen Mr. Hudson?" Rowland asked of the others. "Has he not returned?"

Each one shook his head and looked grave, and Rowland attempted to reassure Mrs. Hudson by saying that of course he had taken refuge in a chalet.

"Go and find him, go and find him!" she cried, insanely. "Don't stand there and talk, or I shall drop dead!" It was now as dark as evening, and Rowland could just distinguish the figure of Singleton scampering homeward with his box and easel. "And where is Mary?" Mrs. Hudson went on; "what in mercy's name

has become of her? Mr. Mallet, why did you ever bring us here?"

There came a prodigious flash of lightning, and the limitless tumult about them turned clearer than mid-summer noonday. The brightness lasted long enough to enable Rowland to see a woman's figure on the top of an eminence near the house. It was Mary Garland, questioning the lurid darkness for Roderick. Rowland sprang out to interrupt her vigil, but in a moment he met her coming back. He seized her hand and hurried her to the house, where, as soon as she stepped into the covered gallery, Mrs. Hudson fell upon her with frantic lamentations.

"Did you see anything—nothing?" she cried. "Tell Mr. Mallet he must go and find him, with some men, some lights, some wrappings. Go, go, go, sir! In mercy, go!"

Rowland was extremely perturbed by the poor lady's vociferous folly, for he deemed her anxiety superfluous. He had offered his suggestion with sincerity; nothing was more probable than that Roderick had found shelter in a herdsman's cabin. These were numerous on the neighbouring mountains, and the storm had given fair warning of its approach. Mary stood there very pale, saying nothing, only looking at him. He expected that she would try to soothe her cousin. "*Could* you find him?" she suddenly asked. "Would it be of use?"

The question seemed to him a flash intenser than the lightning that was raking in the sky before them. It shattered his dream that he weighed in the scale! But before he could answer, the full fury of the storm was upon them; the rain descended in sounding torrents. Every one fell back into the house. There had been no time to light lamps, and in the little uncarpeted parlour, in the unnatural darkness, Rowland felt Mary's hand upon his arm. For a moment it had an eloquent pressure; it seemed to be a retractation of her senseless

challenge, an assurance that she believed, for Roderick, what he believed. But nevertheless, thought Rowland, the cry had come, her heart had spoken; her first impulse had been to sacrifice him. He had been uncertain before; here at least was the comfort of certainty!

It must be confessed, however, that the certainty in question did little to enliven the gloom of that formidable evening. There was a noisy crowd about him in the room—noisy even with the accompaniment of the continual thunder-peals; lodgers and servants, chattering, shuffling, bustling, annoying him equally by making too light of the tempest and by vociferating their alarm. In the disorder it was some time before a lamp was lighted, and the first thing he saw as it was swung from the ceiling was the white face of Mrs. Hudson, who was being carried out of the room in a swoon by two stout maid-servants, with Mary Garland forcing a passage. He rendered what help he could, but when they laid the poor woman on her bed Mary motioned him away.

"I think you make her worse," she said.

Rowland went to his own room. The partitions in Swiss mountain inns are thin, and from time to time he heard Mrs. Hudson moaning three doors off. Considering its great fury, the storm took long to expend itself; it was upwards of three hours before the thunder ceased. But even then the rain continued to fall heavily, and the night, which had come on, was impenetrably black. This lasted till near midnight. Rowland thought of Mary Garland's question in the porch, but he thought even more that, although the fetid interior of a high-nestling chalet may offer a convenient refuge from an Alpine tempest, there was no possible music in the universe so sweet as the sound of Roderick's voice. At midnight, through his dripping window-pane, he saw a star, and he immediately went downstairs and out into the gallery. The rain had ceased, the cloud-masses were dissevered here and there, and several stars were

visible. In a few minutes he heard a step behind him, and, turning, saw Mary Garland. He asked about Mrs. Hudson, and learned that she was sleeping, exhausted by her fruitless lamentations. Mary kept scanning the darkness, but she said nothing to cast doubt on Roderick's having found a refuge. Rowland noticed it. "This also have I guaranteed!" he said to himself. There was something that Mary wished to learn, and a question presently revealed it. "What made him start on a long walk so suddenly?" she asked. "I saw him at eleven o'clock, and then he meant to go to Engelberg and sleep."

"On his way to Interlaken!" Rowland said.

"Yes," she answered, under cover of the darkness.

"We had some talk," said Rowland, "and he seemed, for the day, to have given up Interlaken."

"Did you dissuade him?"

"Not exactly. We discussed another question, which for the time superseded his plan."

Mary was silent. Then—"May I ask whether your discussion was violent?" she said.

"I am afraid it was agreeable to neither of us."

"And Roderick left you in—in irritation?"

"I offered him my company on his walk. He declined it."

Mary paced slowly to the end of the gallery and then came back. "If he had gone to Engelberg," she said, "he would have reached the hotel before the storm began."

Rowland felt a sudden explosion of ferocity. "Oh, if you like," he cried, "he can start for Interlaken as soon as he comes back!"

But she did not even notice his anger. "Will he come back early?" she went on.

"We may suppose so."

"He will know how anxious we are, and he will start with the first light," said Mary.

Rowland was on the point of declaring that Roderick's readiness to throw himself into the feelings of others made this extremely probable; but he checked himself and said simply, "I expect him at sunrise."

Mary bent her eyes once more upon the irresponsive darkness, and then in silence went into the house. Rowland, it must be averred, in spite of his resolution not to be nervous, found no sleep that night. When the early dawn began to tremble in the east he came forth again into the open air. The storm had completely cleared the atmosphere, and the day gave promise of cloudless splendour. Rowland watched the early sun-shafts slowly reaching higher, and remembered that if Roderick did not come back to breakfast there were two things to be taken into account. One was the heaviness of the soil on the mountain-sides, saturated with the rain, which would make him walk slowly; the other was the fact that, speaking without irony, he was not remarkable for throwing himself into the sentiments of others. Breakfast at the inn was early, and by breakfast-time Roderick had not reappeared. Then Rowland admitted that he was nervous. Neither Mrs. Hudson nor her companion had left their apartment; Rowland had a mental vision of the two women sitting there looking at each other and listening; he had no desire to see them more closely. There were a couple of men who hung about the inn as guides for going up the Titlis; Rowland sent each of them forth in a different direction to ask for news of Roderick at every chalet door within a morning's walk. Then he called Sam Singleton, whose peregrinations had made him an excellent mountaineer, and whose zeal and sympathy were now unbounded, and the two started together on a journey of research. By the time they had lost sight of the inn Rowland was obliged to confess that decidedly Roderick had had time to come back.

He wandered about for several hours, but he found only the sunny stillness of the mountain-sides. Before

long he parted company with Singleton, who, to his suggestion that separation would multiply their powers, assented with a silent frightened look which reflected too vividly his own rapidly-dawning thought. The day was magnificent; the sun was everywhere; the storm had lashed the lower slopes into a deeper flush of autumnal colour, and the snow-peaks reared themselves against the near horizon in shining blocks and incisive peaks. Rowland made his way to several chalets, but most of them were empty. He thumped at their low foul doors with a kind of nervous savage anger; he challenged the stupid silence to tell him something about his friend. Some of these places had evidently not been open for months. The silence everywhere was horrible; it seemed to mock at his impatience and to be a conscious symbol of calamity. In the midst of it, at the door of one of the cabins, quite alone, sat a hideous *crétin*, who grinned at Rowland over his goitre when, hardly knowing what he did, he questioned him. This creature's family was scattered on the mountain-sides; he could give Rowland no help to find them. Rowland climbed into many awkward places, and skirted intently and peeringly many an ugly chasm and steep-dropping ledge. But the sun, as I have said, was everywhere; it illumined the deep places over which, not knowing where to turn next, he halted and lingered, and showed him nothing but the stony Alpine void—nothing so human even as death. At noon he paused in his quest and sat down on a stone; the conviction was pressing upon him that the worst that was now possible was true. He stopped looking; he was afraid to go on. He sat there for an hour, sick to the depths of his soul. Without his knowing why, several things, chiefly trivial, that had happened during the last two years, and that he had quite forgotten, became vividly present to his mind. He was aroused at last by the sound of a stone dislodged near by, which rattled down the mountain. In a moment, on a steep

rocky slope opposite to him, he beheld a figure cautiously descending—a figure which was not Roderick. It was Singleton, who had seen him and began to beckon to him.

"Come down—come down!" cried the painter, steadily making his own way down. Rowland saw that as he moved, and even as he selected his foothold and watched his steps, he was looking at something at the bottom of the cliff. This was a great rugged wall which sloped backward from the perpendicular, and the descent, though difficult, was with care sufficiently practicable.

"What do you see?" cried Rowland.

Singleton stopped, looked across at him and seemed to hesitate; then, "Come down—come down!" he simply repeated.

Rowland's course was also a deep descent, and he attacked it so precipitately that he afterwards marvelled he had not broken his neck. It was a ten minutes' headlong scramble. Half-way down he saw something that made him dizzy; he saw what Singleton had seen. In the gorge below them a vague white mass lay tumbled upon the stones. He let himself go, blindly, fiercely. Singleton had reached the rocky bottom of the ravine before him, and had bounded forward and fallen upon his knees. Rowland overtook him, and his own legs bent under him. The thing that yesterday was his friend lay before him as the chance of the last breath had left it, and out of it Roderick's face stared upward open-eyed at the sky.

He had fallen from a great height, but he was singularly little disfigured. The rain had spent its torrents upon him, and his clothes and hair were as wet as if the billows of the ocean had flung him upon the strand. An attempt to move him would show some hideous fracture, some horrible physical dishonour, but what Rowland saw on first looking at him was only a strangely serene expression of life. The eyes were those of a dead man,

but in a short time, when Rowland had closed them, the whole face seemed to awake. The rain had washed away all blood; it was as if Violence, having done her work, had stolen away in shame. Roderick's face might have shamed her; it looked admirably handsome.

"He was a beautiful fellow!" said Singleton.

They looked up through their horror at the cliff from which he had apparently fallen, and which lifted its blank and stony face above him, with no care now but to drink the sunshine on which his eyes were closed; and then Rowland had an immense outbreak of pity and anguish. At last they spoke of carrying him back to the inn. "There must be three or four men," Rowland said, and they must be brought here quickly. I have not the least idea where we are."

"We are at about three hours' walk from home," said Singleton. "I will go for help; I can find my way."

"Remember whom you will have to face!" said Rowland.

"I remember," the excellent fellow answered. "There was nothing I could ever do for him in life; I will do what I can now."

He went off, and Rowland stayed there alone. He watched for seven long hours, and his vigil was for ever memorable. The most rational of men was for an hour the most passionate. He reviled himself with transcendent bitterness, he accused himself of cruelty and injustice, he would have lain down there in Roderick's place to unsay the words that had yesterday driven him forth on his lonely ramble. Roderick had been fond of saying that there are such things as necessary follies, and Rowland was now proving it. At last he grew almost used to the dumb exultation of the cliff above him, and he tried to understand what had happened. Not that it helped him; before the absoluteness of the fact one hypothesis after another lost its interest. Roderick's passionate walk had carried him farther and higher than he knew;

he had outstayed supposably the first menace of the storm, and perhaps even found a defiant entertainment in watching it. Perhaps he had simply lost himself. The tempest had overtaken him, and when he tried to return it was too late. He had attempted to descend the cliff in the darkness, he had made the inevitable slip, and whether he had fallen fifty feet or three hundred little mattered now. The condition of his body indicated the shorter fall. Now that all was over Rowland understood how exclusively, for two years, Roderick had filled his life. His occupation was gone.

Singleton came back with four men—one of them the landlord of the inn. They had formed a sort of rude bier of the frame of a *chaise à porteurs*, and by taking a very roundabout course homeward were able to follow a tolerably level path and carry their burden with a certain decency. To Rowland it seemed as if the little procession would never reach the inn; but as they drew near it he would have given his right hand for a longer delay. The people of the hotel came forward to meet them in a little silent solemn convoy. In the doorway, clinging together, appeared the two bereaved women. Mrs. Hudson tottered forward with outstretched hands and the expression of a blind person; but before she reached her son Mary Garland had rushed past her, and, in the face of the staring, pitying, awe-stricken crowd, had flung herself, with the magnificent movement of one whose rights were supreme and with a loud tremendous cry, upon the senseless vestige of her love.

That cry still lives in Rowland's ears. It interposes persistently against the reflection that when he sometimes —very rarely—sees her, she is unreservedly kind to him; against the memory that during the dreary journey back to America, made of course with his assistance, there was a great frankness in her gratitude, a great gratitude in her frankness. Mary Garland lives with Mrs. Hudson at Northampton, where Rowland visits his cousin

Cecilia more frequently than of old. When he calls upon Mary he never sees Mrs. Hudson. Cecilia, who, having her shrewd impression that he comes to see the young lady at the other house as much as to see herself, does not feel obliged to seem unduly flattered, calls him whenever he reappears the most restless of mortals. But he always says to her in answer, "No, I assure you I am the most patient!"

THE END.